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# CHANDAMAMA



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# CHANDAMAMA

Vol. 28

December 1999

No. 4

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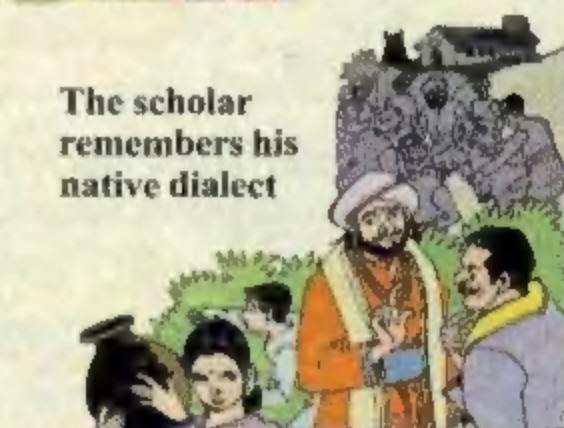
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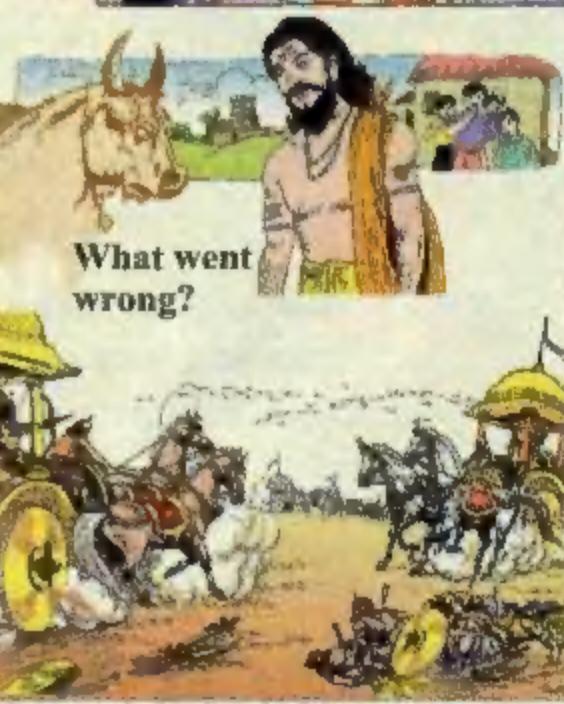
### HIGHLIGHTS



Singer  
and  
his Admirers



The scholar  
remembers his  
native dialect



Story of the Mahabharata



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UNDEARING  
GIFT  
YOU CAN  
THINK OF  
FOR YOUR  
NEAR AND DEAR ONES  
FAR AWAY



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## ARM IN ARM WITH YOU

"Where are you, *Chandamama*?" If so many asked this question aloud, many more did so in silence, looking for their dear companion at the stalls or in the postman's bag.

*Chandamama's* yearning to reach you was no less poignant. It missed you as much as you missed it.

Indeed, what a joy it is to be back with you! And on an auspicious day dedicated to children, the birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru (14 November).

All's well that ends well! Our separation from each other has only enhanced our fondness for each other. *Chandamama* must admit that it is your love and your missing it which have been among the great forces behind the magazine's reappearance.

*Chandamama* proposes to serve you with love, dedication and, of course, imaginativeness. With the new century unfolding itself, your magazine will continue to unfold new treasures before you. Please see the announcement in this issue about our new features.

*Chandamama* greets you and looks forward to stepping into the new century and the new millennium arm in arm with you.



## CHANDAMAMA

Dear Readers, Patrons, and Well-wishers,

I am writing this letter to you with a strange feeling of joy and regret together. It is a great joy that we are able to revive your dear companion, *Chandamama*. Our regret is that we deprived you of it for more than a year.

I need not burden you with an account of the waves of ordeal, coming in rapid succession which engulfed the publication. No human endeavour, but for the Grace of the Divine Mother, could have surmounted the crisis. That your magazine, your message of light and delight, is once again in your hands, is a proof that the Divine cares for our endeavours, however feeble, in serving a worthy cause - in this case the cause of promoting the joy of the children of India with a happy and purposeful reading fare in their own mother-tongues, apart from Sanskrit and English; inspiring them to dream and learn together despite the geographical and linguistic differences. I bow to the Divine in gratitude.

In a human world, the Divine Grace often works through blessed human instruments. The man who appeared in that chosen role in the case of *Chandamama* is Shri Vinod Sethi, an ardent lover of *Chandamama* and an imaginative entrepreneur. I congratulate him and assure him that his creative intervention will assume great significance in the history of children's literature.

Also, I must thank and thank profusely the numerous admirers of *Chandamama* who have ardently desired its revival. Their goodwill is among our most valued assets.

The magazine will come out not only rich in content, variety and illustrations, but also in tastefully elegant appearance. It will also be available in electronic editions such as compact disc. We will intimate you of other enterprises emerging from the publication in due time.

On behalf of the management of the publication, I crave your indulgence for the unfortunate interruption in the life of your magazine, spread over more than half a century. I promise that my colleagues and myself would spare no pains to see that *Chandamama* continues in its unique role, keeping pace with the best in the changing times.

Yours truly

B. Viswanatha Reddi

Publisher

## PRIME MINISTER A THIRD TIME

Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee took the oath of office and secrecy as Prime Minister of India for the third time on October 13. He was Prime Minister for the first time, for 13 days, in May 1996. He was then heading a minority government. He led an 18-party coalition from March 1998. Unfortunately, his government lasted only 13 months, and the country went in for general elections for the 13th time since 1950 in September. A wit remarked, lightheartedly though, that if he were to come back to power, he would govern India for the next 13 years!

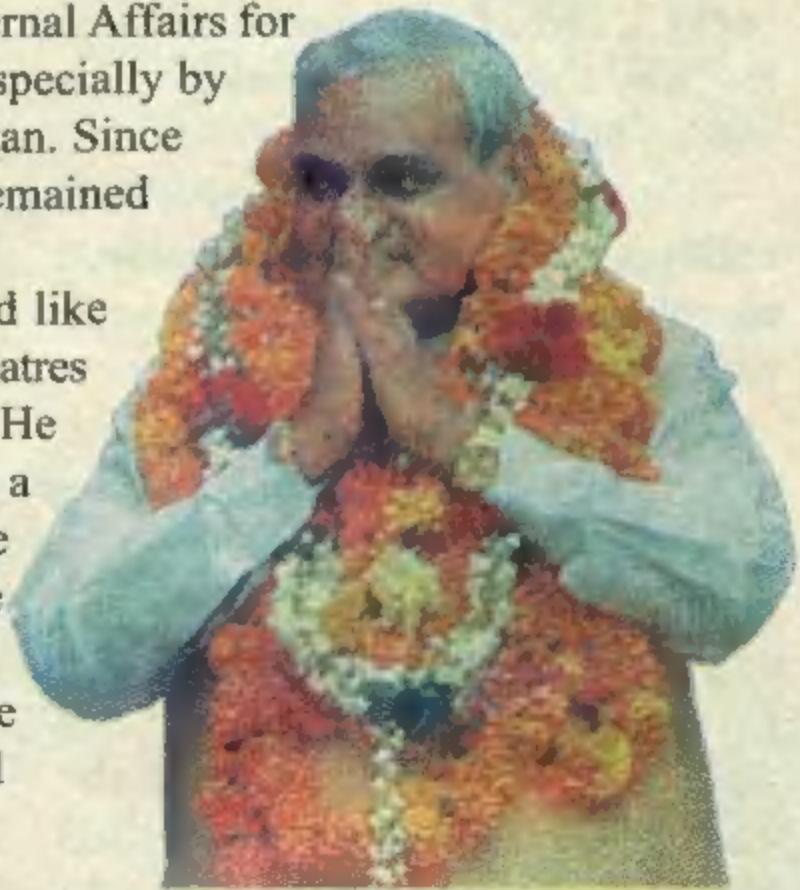
This time his party—the Bharatiya Janata Party—was joined by 23 other parties, who all felt that only an alliance with the BJP could result in a stable government. The National Democratic Alliance romped home with a comfortable majority winning nearly 300 of the 540 seats.

The image Shri Vajpayee had created earlier in the 12 months after taking over in March 1998 was never tarnished and a majority of the people of India wanted him to come back as Prime Minister.

Young Atal was active in the students movement and slowly found his way to the Jan Sangh founded by Shyama Prasad Mukherji in 1951. In 1957 he fought the elections to the Parliament and was one of the four Jan Sangh candidates to win. He stood in Lucknow and Vidisha in 1989, winning both the seats. In 1991, 1996 and 1998, he won from Lucknow—a feat he repeated this year. In 1977, he was invited by Shri Morarji Desai to join his cabinet. He was given an option and chose the portfolio of External Affairs for himself, in which he made a mark, especially by forging an understanding with Pakistan. Since the 1971 war, the two countries had remained sworn enemies.

Our Prime Minister is a bachelor and like many of us, likes to watch movies in theatres and hockey and football on the field. He loves cats and dogs as pets and given a chance, he would pick up the Panchatantra stories for bed-time reading.

Under his able leadership, India can hope to become a nation vibrant with life and dynamism. He is a believer in India's great past and greater future.





## REMEMBERING UNCLE NEHRU

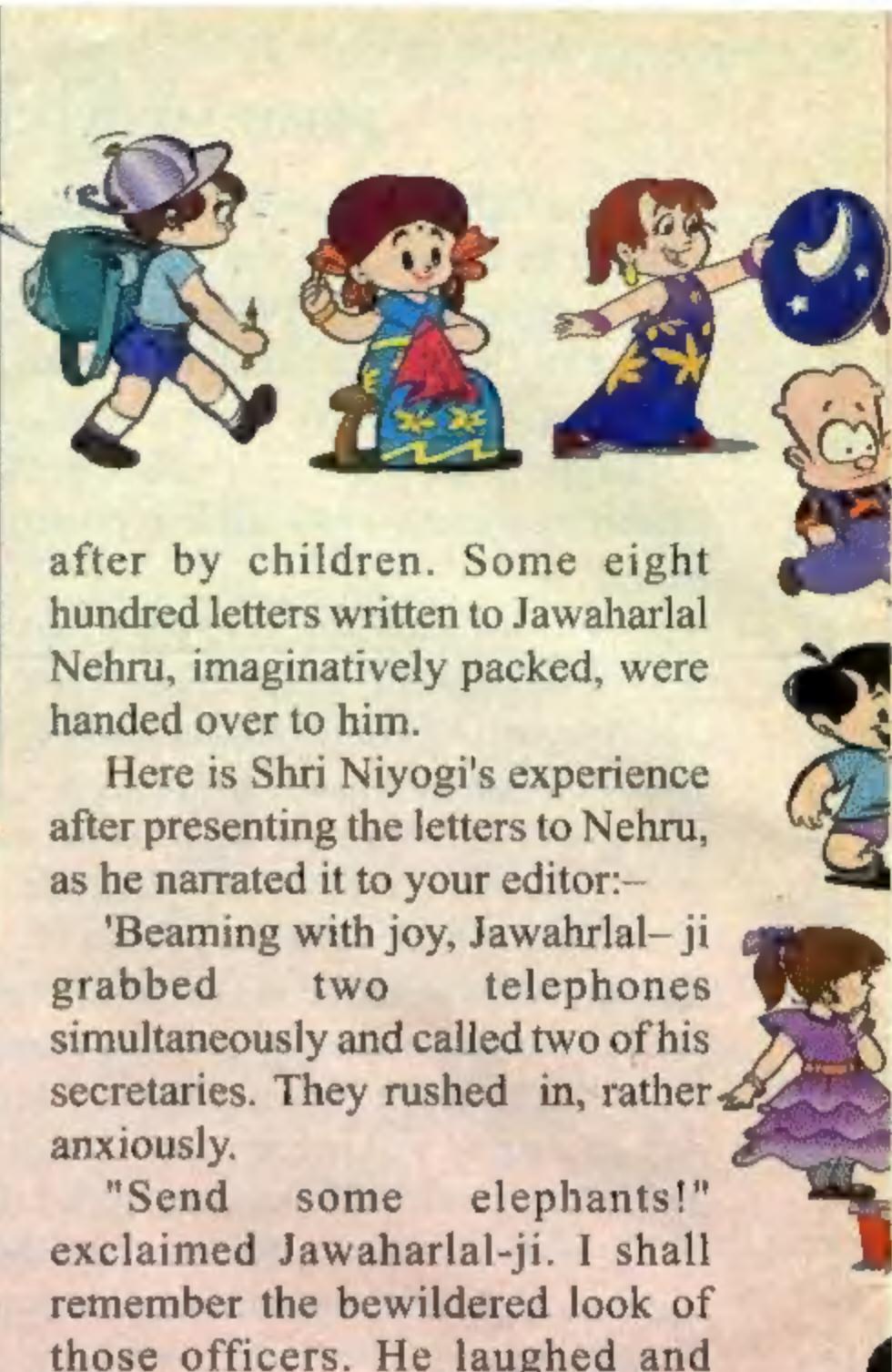
The World War II had destroyed Japan. The people of the island were struggling hard to raise their nation from the dust.

Along with all the other institutions, the zoo in Tokyo too had badly suffered. The creature most loved by children had perished. That was an elephant.

"Can't your country give our children an elephant?" a Japanese parent asked a noble Indian guest he had, Shri Himanshu Niyogi.

"Why don't the children write a letter to their Uncle Nehru, our Prime Minister?" asked Shri Niyogi.

His simple, spontaneous suggestion was greeted with enthusiasm. Although he did not wish to be publicised, the newspapers flashed his suggestion and he was enthusiastically sought



after by children. Some eight hundred letters written to Jawaharlal Nehru, imaginatively packed, were handed over to him.

Here is Shri Niyogi's experience after presenting the letters to Nehru, as he narrated it to your editor:-

'Beaming with joy, Jawaharlal-ji grabbed two telephones simultaneously and called two of his secretaries. They rushed in, rather anxiously.

"Send some elephants!" exclaimed Jawaharlal-ji. I shall remember the bewildered look of those officers. He laughed and narrated the situation to them.

"Let an elephant go as a gift from the children of India to the children of Japan" I proposed. Jawaharlal-ji liked the idea immensely.'

Thus did a baby elephant, christened Indira, made her voyage to Japan. She was loved by the children of Japan as she loved them. She died in October 1984, a few days before the death of her namesake, Mrs. Indira Gandhi.

The instance is a sample of Nehru's response to any appeal from



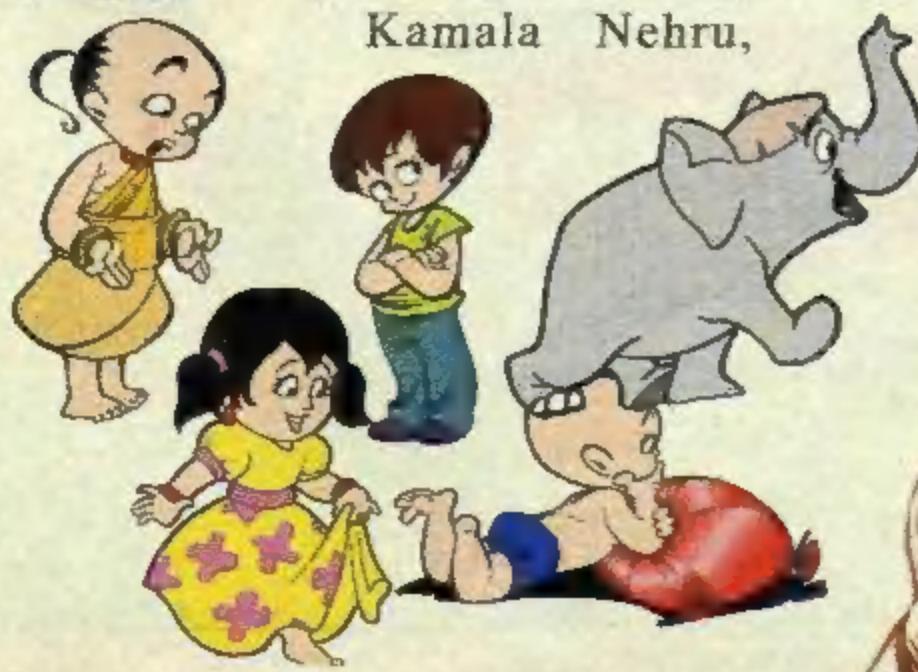


children.

Your magazine, *Chandamama*, impressed him. He wrote, "I am interested to learn of the children's magazine *Chandamama*. It is rather an unusual feat to issue a children's periodical in six languages. I wish it success." (This was about 27 years ago. Now the magazine is available in twelve languages.)

This great lover of children was born on 14 November 1889, the only son of Pandit Motilal Nehru and Swaruprani, at Allahabad. At fifteen he was admitted to the famous school at Harrow, England. After his studies at Cambridge he returned to India and followed his celebrated father's profession as a lawyer. But soon his interest went over to politics of the day - India's struggle for freedom. The British government

put him behind the bars nine times. He spent totally nine years away from his family and countrymen. He could just reach his wife, Kamala Nehru,



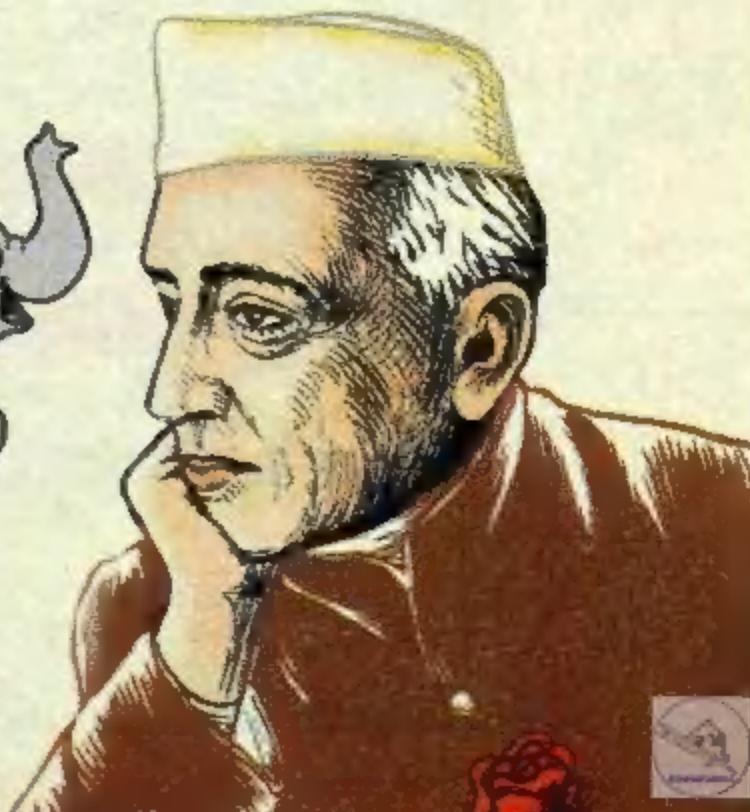
when she was breathing her last in Germany.

His courage and talents soon impressed all and most of all Gandhiji. He became the Secretary of the Indian National Congress and then its President, elected to that post again and again.

When freedom came at last, he became India's first Prime Minister, a position which he held till the 27th of May 1964 when he passed away.

Apart from being a statesman, Nehru was a highly gifted writer. The most popular among his works are his Autobiography, Glimpses of World History (a collection of his letters written from jail to his daughter), and The Discovery of India. As in his talks, so is his writings, he showed memorable wit and humour.

That his birthday is celebrated as Children's Day, is no doubt the most fitting tribute to him.



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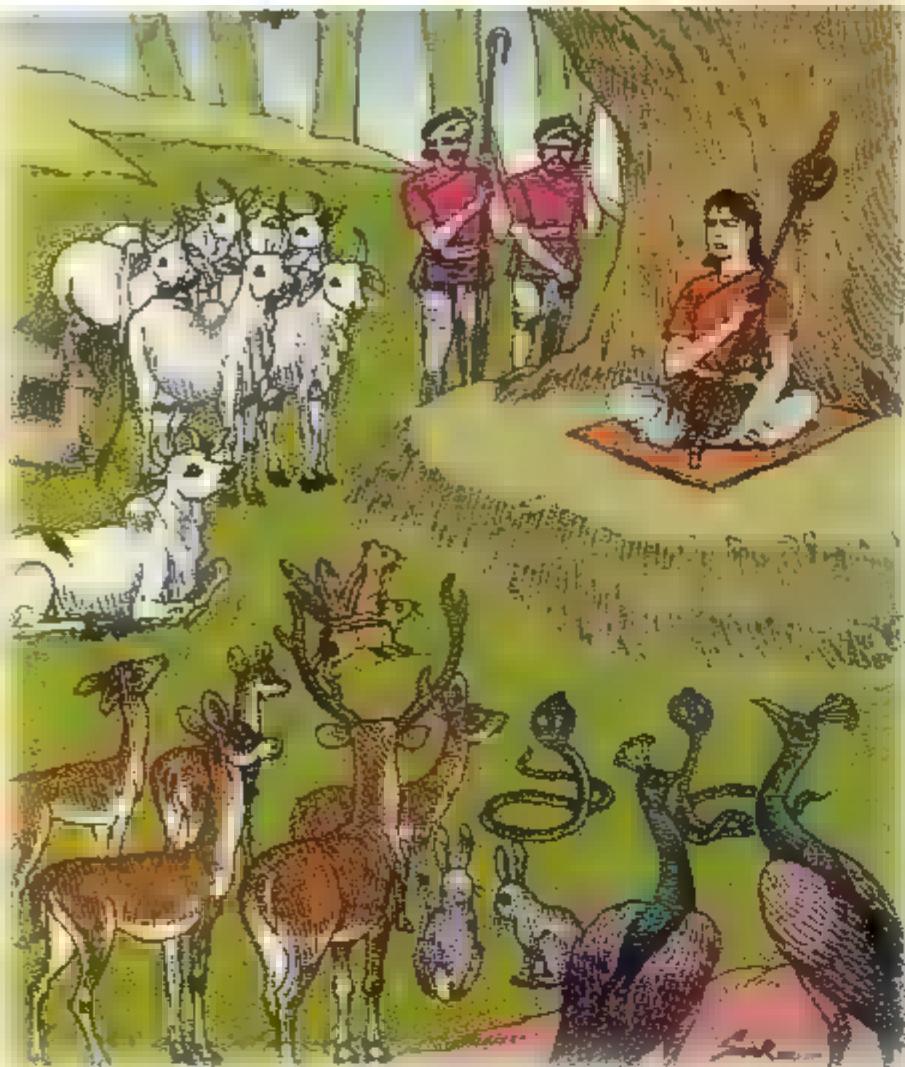


New tales of  
King Vikram  
and the Vetala!

## THE SINGER AND HIS ADMIRERS

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. Gusts of wind shook the nearby forest. Between thunderclaps and moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground with the



corpse lying on his shoulder, the Vetal that possessed the corpse said, "O King, your conduct is perplexing. Instead of enjoying a sound sleep in your luxurious palace, why should you indulge in this ritual at such an unearthly hour? Has anybody cast a spell on you and are you acting under it as did Murlidhar the singer? Well, let me tell you his story in order to explain the point I am trying to make."

The Vetal went on:

In the hilly frontiers of the kingdom of Shripur lived Murlidhar. He would sit on a slab of stone amidst green trees or take position beside a brook and keep singing for hours at a stretch. Any person passing by would stop and listen to him with rapt

attention. Even the birds would stop chattering or flapping their wings. Woodcutters saw even wild animals moving closer to him and lazing around him as if in a trance.

A report of Murlidhar's genius reached the king's ears. He sent his minister to Murlidhar with a request that he should become a musician at his court.

But Murlidhar explained to the minister: "My problem is, I cannot sing when asked to do so. Mood and song come to me spontaneously."

"But Murlidhar, is it proper to disregard the king's wish?" asked the minister, quite affably.

Murlidhar thought for a moment. "Very well, sir, I shall visit the court and sing for an hour only. Kindly do not ask me to remain there permanently as the court-singer," he pleaded.

Call it a success or failure, the minister reported all about his mission to the king.

"Let us fix a date when he will perform in the court. It should be in the morning, so that he reaches the palace on the previous day and stays as our guest. My wise minister, provide him with all the comforts he can dream of and the best food from the royal kitchen. Once he has sampled the kind of life he will live here, I'm sure, he will agree to become our court singer," said the

king.

Arrangements were made accordingly. Murlidhar was received personally by the king. He was given the best suite in the royal guest house with a dozen servants at his beck and call.

He sang in the court in the morning, seated on a carpet knit with gold thread. Damsels stood fanning him. Fragrant water was sprinkled on him and his audience.

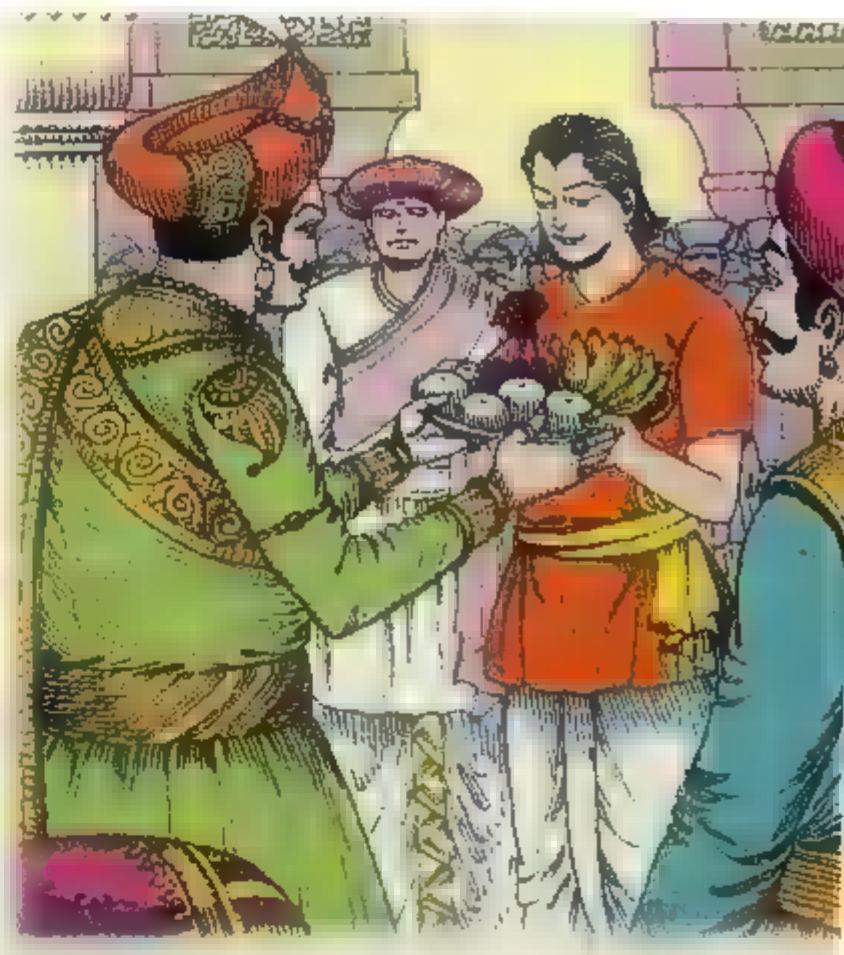
All sat charmed, listening to him, but he stopped after an hour and nobody could persuade him to sing any longer. The king gave him a handsome reward.

"Murlidhar, since you sang for an hour at the king's court, why not also sing at my daughter's wedding?" his landlord, a nobleman, asked him.

Murlidhar obliged the landlord.

Thereafter it became a matter of competition among the noblemen of the kingdom to invite Murlidhar and make him sing. Murlidhar did not disappoint anybody, but nowhere did he sing for more than an hour.

One of the noblemen, a powerful feudal lord, announced that if anybody could make Murlidhar sing for more than an hour, he would be



rewarded with ■ thousand gold coins. Several noblemen, tempted by the offer, tried their best to make Murlidhar sing for a bit longer, but they never succeeded.

One day, while returning from a nobleman's house, Murlidhar sat down under a banyan tree in front of a temple. Two persons who sat on the other side of the tree were arguing between themselves about Murlidhar's refusal to sing for more than an hour in anybody's house. One of the two was sure that Murlidhar was arrogant; the other asserted that Murlidhar did so in obedience to



*Just as one tree bearing fragrant flowers can fill a forest with delightful smell, so also one worthy son can glorify the whole family.*

*—Chanakya*



"I never miss an opportunity to listen to you. I am always present in your audiences," said the man. "My name is Chandrakant."

Indeed, Murlidhar remembered having seen the man again and again.

Murlidhar followed Chandrakant to his house.

It was a beautiful place. In front of Chandrakant's hut there was a garden. Beyond that was a forest. It was late in the afternoon and a rainbow spanned the sky.

Chandrakant's wife brought some fruits and honeyed milk for his guest and his sons and daughters prostrated before him.

Murlidhar's heart was filled with joy and peace. "Can I sing for a while?" he asked Chandrakant.

Tears welling in his eyes, Chandrakant said, "What greater boon can this poor man's family expect?"

Murlidhar began singing. He did not stop as usual after one hour—not even after two hours. He sang for three hours at a stretch. A hundred villagers had quietly gathered there, but they stood or sat in perfect silence, without coming very close to the singer.

His singing over, he stood up. Only then did he grow conscious of the fact that he had sung for a long time. "I'll see to it that you receive the reward which a landlord has

some higher principle.

The first man also insisted that Murlidhar was proud. That is why he sang only in the houses of noblemen.

Their argument remained inconclusive. The first man went away. The second man suddenly saw Murlidhar and bowed to him. Joy and surprise was writ large on his face.

"Sir, you look tired. My house is nearby. Why not rest for a while?" proposed the man. Murlidhar looked at the man. His face was quite familiar.

"Have we met earlier?" Murlidhar asked the man. "What is your name?"

announced," he said and he proved true to his promise.

The Vetala paused and then spoke out suddenly: "O King, why did Murlidhar sing for three hours at Chandrakant's house whereas he sang only for an hour at other places where people who appreciated good music had gathered? Why was he keen that Chandrakant received the reward? Was it because he felt flattered? Answer me if you can. Should you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answer, your head would roll off your neck!"

Answered King Vikram instantly: Murlidhar sang only when inspired. What inspired him was nature or tranquillity. Secondly, a gifted singer looks forward to listeners who are really lovers of music. At Chandrakant's house he met with both these conditions, for Chandrakant was evidently a great

lover of his talent.

"At the royal court the king was more interested in tempting him to accept his offer than in enjoying his music. Different noblemen invited him spurred by a spirit of competition among themselves, not out of love for music. But it was so different with Chandrakant!

"If flattery could have inspired Murlidhar, then he would have been very pleased with the king and the noblemen! They knew how to flatter him. Chandrakant did nothing to flatter him. Murlidhar became conscious of having sung for more than an hour only after he had finished singing. Since a reward had been announced, there was no reason why it should not go to a great lover of music who was a poor man!"

No sooner had the king concluded his answer than the Vetala, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.





## WHAT WENT WRONG ?

The bull dedicated to Lord Shiva at the village temple was a very proud creature. It enjoyed charging at whoever passed by it, even though it never really harmed anybody. Scared by it, some people, who could not run well, would roll on the dust and some would fall into the roadside bushes.

The village landlord's son, Shivshankar, who used to live at his maternal uncle's house miles away, because they had a good primary school there, had come to his own village. He was playing with other boys of his age on the river-bank, not far from the temple.

He sulked under the humiliation of being charged at by the bull while he was passing by it, for no fault of his. Luckily his playmates had not seen his plight. They told him, by way of warning, "That bull is a

haughty one. We are accustomed to its rowdyism and we don't mind it. Besides, it being Lord Shiva's bull, nobody can give it ■ beating, you know!"

But the young heir to the estate was not consoled. He was not just 'anybody'; he was the landlord's son, in fact the only son—himself the future landlord. No bull could be allowed to do towards him what it could do towards anybody else and get away with it!

A mendicant was passing by. The poor fellow, scantily dressed and holding a tattered bag for collecting alms, was sure to provoke the bull, thought the boys, and the bull would charge at him and he would not even know how to run.

The boys waited with bated breath. The Zamindar's son, in order to show that he was different from

and braver than the rest, went closer to the bull, in order to enjoy the fun better. He of course took care to keep himself behind the haughty creature so that it did not see him.

The mendicant was not unfamiliar with the bull's habit. He slowed his pace and muttered "Shivashankar, Shivashankar!" as he passed by it. This name of the deity of the shrine, uttered with devotion, somehow always pleased the bull and it remained calm. The mendicant walked past it facing no problem.

Being nearer the bull, the landlord's son alone heard the mendicant's muttering. He was delighted for two reasons. First, he had learnt the secret of keeping the bull calm. Second, his own name was Shivashankar!

"The mendicant is really brave!" said the boys.

Shivashankar returned to his friends, clapping his hands and announcing, "I too can pass by the bull and it will behave!"

"No, please don't do such a thing!" cautioned his friends.

But Shivashankar, sure that he knew the secret of keeping the bull tame, braved into its presence, muttering, "Myself, myself, myself!" After all his name was Shivashankar!

The bull charged at him with far greater gusto than ever. Shivashankar ran for his life and fell down, stumbling on a boulder, and rolled into the bushes.

The mendicant had not gone too far. He came running to the spot and lifted up the boy from the dust. Shivashankar's friends too came rushing.

Shivashankar was in tears. What is more, he was bewildered. What went wrong?





Legend has it that the Garasia tribals of the Pindwara and Abu Road regions of Sirohi, the Kotra region of Udaipur and Bali region of Pali district originally descended from the Chauhan Rajputs. About six centuries ago, it is said,



after a defeat in a battle, they fled to the hills where they mingled with the local Bhil tribals. Generations later, they emerged as a distinct group. The Garasias have an interesting custom of marriage through elopement which usually takes place on the occasion of the annual Gaur fair held during the full moon of March/April. Widows are forced to remarry since their children – and not they – are given a share in the

husband's property. The Garasias also celebrate a feast of honour for their dead which is performed only on Mondays. A stone memorial called *sura* is erected after the cremation.



*The learned have prescribed penance for the murder of pious man, a drunkard, for a thief and for one who has violated a solemn vow, but there is no pardon for the ungrateful.*

*—The Panchtantra*

# THE SAGA OF 1857



*The narration so far : Here and there, all over India, the fire of revolution was burning. The two most outstanding leaders of the revolution were the young Rani of Jhansi and Nana Sahib. The British had tried to take over the kingdom of Jhansi without any reason, upon the Raja's death. But the Rani would not let them do so. She fought the invading British army bravely, but when it was no longer possible to protect the fort, she escaped dressed as a man, riding a horse, carrying her infant adopted son tied to her back.*

The Rani rode on, with two of her faithful maids, Mandar and Kashi, galloping on both sides of her. They were followed by a small but valiant army. Again and again the Rani had to turn back and face batches of her enemy pursuing her.

For a full day she marched forward without even an hour's rest. Her immediate destination was Kalpi. She had left Jhansi the night before and by the time she entered Kalpi, it was midnight.

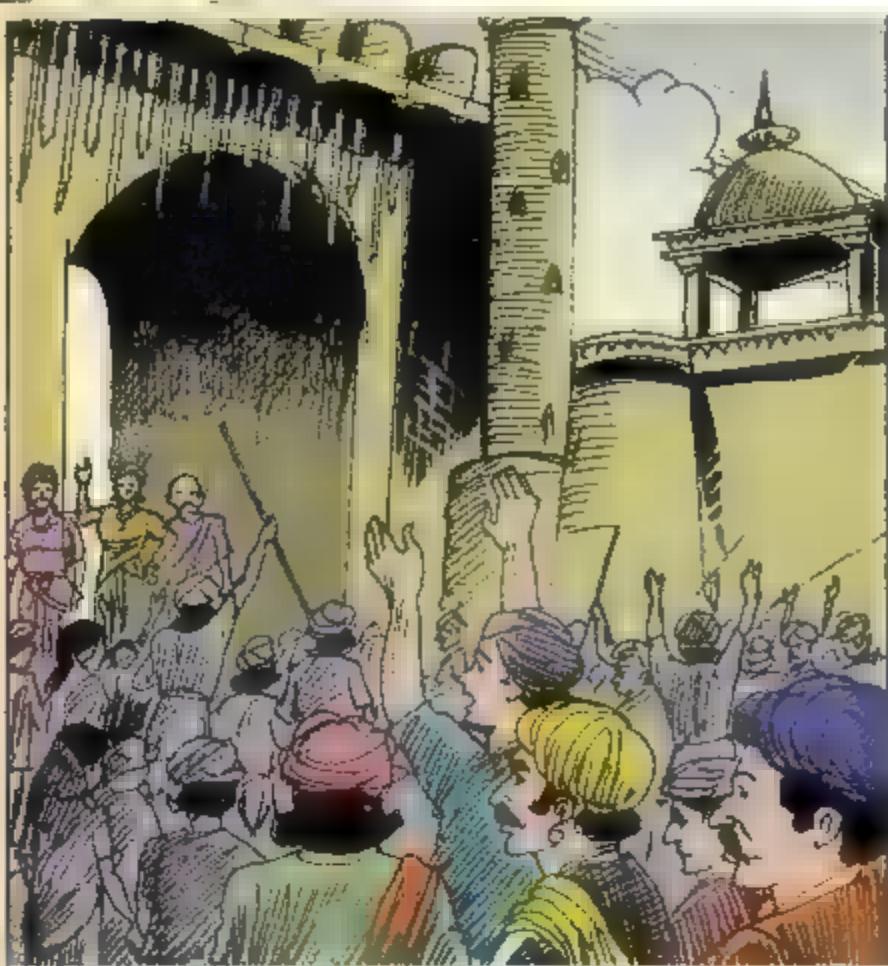
In front of the palace in which Rao Sahib, a cousin of Nana Sahib and a true patriot, lived, soldiers stood

guard holding burning torches.

"The Rani! The goddess-like Rani of Jhansi is here!" they whispered among themselves, and Rao Sahib came out to receive her. As the Rani dismounted from her horse, several ladies of the palace took charge of her sleeping child, while the men took hold of her horse. Alas, the horse had done the last bit of her service to the Rani. It collapsed and died.

The Rani knelt and patted the animal. Teardrops fell on it—her tribute to her silent, faithful servant.

But there was no time for the



Rani to relax. As soon as it was morning, she sat with Rao Sahib to decide on their strategy. The Rani's spies reached there before long and informed that after a day of plunder and mad massacre at Jhansi, half of the British troops were marching towards this region, under the leadership of Sir Hugh Rose, an asset to the British Raj in India.

The Rani and Rao Sahib and another great hero of the revolution, Tatya Tope, hurriedly brought together the soldiers placed at their disposal by three or four Rajas and feudal chiefs of the region. Under Tatya Tope's generalship they marched against the Company's soldiers and met them at Kundhgaon. A bloody battle followed. Unfortunately, Tatya Tope had not found enough time to organise the

native soldiers under one discipline. After hours of fight, they had to retreat. Hugh Rose's army entered Kalpi and gleefully plundered the town. Their greatest gift was Rao Sahib's armoury, rich with guns newly made in his own factory and a huge stock of gun-powder.

The British rejoiced their victory, but were disappointed at their failure to capture either Rani Lakshmibai or Tatya Tope or Rao Sahib. The three leaders reorganised their army and marched on to Gwalior. The ruler of Gwalior, Scindia, had been a collaborator with the British. The nobles and even the common people of Gwalior, however, held the revolutionaries in high esteem.

As soon as the patriots approached Gwalior, Scindia fled the city. A rousing reception was given to the Rani and her illustrious compatriots.

Hugh Rose felt awfully humiliated. He knew that if the British failed to restore Gwalior to Scindia, all the rulers will lose faith in the capacity of the English East India Company to protect them! Luckily for him, Jhansi was fully under the control of the British. It was not necessary for the British battalions to be present there. He recalled them and with a giant-size army, proceeded to Gwalior. He made Scindia ride at the head of his

army. This proved tactically highly favourable to them. The people of Gwalior respected the revolutionaries and desired the foreigners to pack off. But they had also natural sympathy for their hereditary ruler, Scindia. When they saw that to fight the foreigners would mean to fight their own ruler, they remained neutral.

The Rani offered a valiant and determined resistance. She was always in the forefront of her army, never behind. Unfortunately, her prize horse had died; the new horse she rode was not familiar with her movements and manoeuvres. Her enemies, on the other hand, were ruthless. Sir Hugh Rose was a skilled and highly experienced general. The English captains under him had fought several battles. However, the Rani, aged only twenty, kept them engaged in a fierce fight for a long time, her only assets being her unique courage, determination, and patriotism.

Her soldiers were a dedicated lot, but most of them being untrained, they fell before the crafty attack of the professional foreign soldiers by the hundreds. The situation would have been different if only the ruler of Gwalior had stood by her. That was not to be.

Late in the afternoon, the Rani's lieutenants pleaded with her to retreat. "There's no point in your



getting killed here. The people can once again gather under your flag only if you are alive," they said.

The Rani respected their sentiments and logic. She, along with Mandar, Kashi, and a handful of soldiers, left the battlefield.

She rode at great speed. Her enemies pursued her like hungry hounds. They knew that they would receive the reward of their life from their masters if they could kill or capture the Rani.

The Rani took to a narrow lane at a cross-roads. Her pursuers could not know in which direction she went. They divided themselves into groups and rushed in all directions. The Rani's bodyguards suddenly stopped and when a group of pursuers came



near them, cut them down!

The Rani rode on safe for a moment. But another group of soldiers were seen following her. There was a rivulet. The Rani could cross far broader stretches of water on her old galloping horse. But the new one was not that able. It stopped and trotted along the shore nervously.

Just then the pursuers came closer and attacked the Rani's party. Mandar was wounded. The Rani had by then reached a point on the river-bank where the water was shallow. She could have crossed to the other shore, but Mandar's cry made her turn and she came rushing to her rescue. Her sword dazzled in the dusk and Mandar's tormentor fell off his horse, dead. The Rani dismounted and held Mandar who was gasping. A coward among her pursuers aimed his sword at her head. She was severely

wounded. The next moment her bodyguards finished off the pursuers and carried the awfully bleeding Rani to a small hut nearby.

"My boys!" said the Rani in a faint voice, "burn my body as soon as I breathe my last. The villains will soon arrive. But they should not be able to touch my body."

Indeed, she breathed her last the very next moment. Her faithful attendants gathered a huge mount of dry leaves and wood and cremated her.

Thus ended the life of one of the noblest characters that ever lived. The only person in history comparable to her is Joan of Arc.

Says Jawaharlal Nehru : "One name stands out above others and is revered still in popular memory, the name of Lakshmi Bai, Rani of Jhansi, a girl of twenty years of age, who

died fighting. ‘Best and bravest’ of the rebel leaders—she was called by the English general who opposed her.”

The great rebellion soon came to an end for, fighting bravely, one by one the heroes of the revolt met with their end, some in the battle-field and some on the gallows.

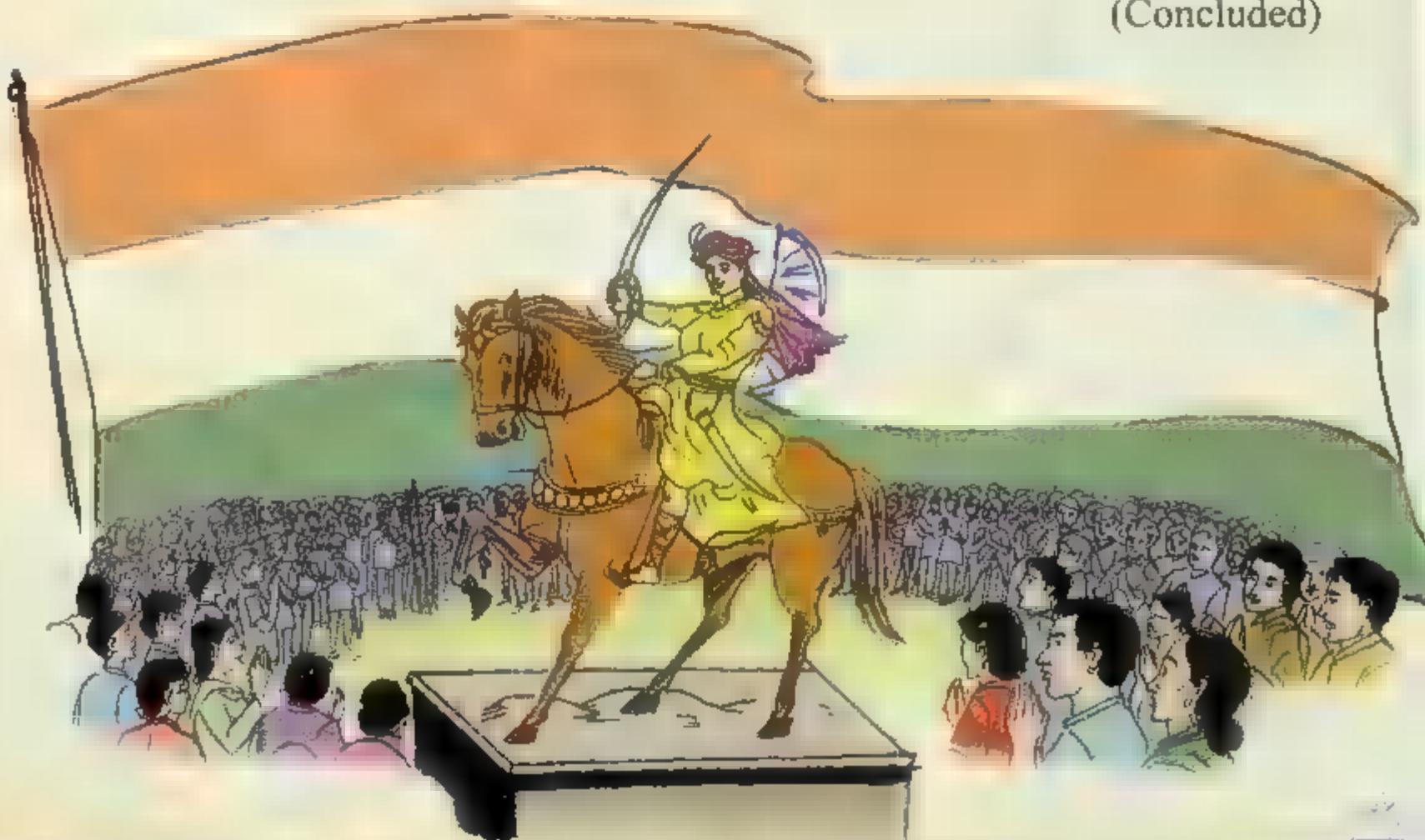
Heroism, courage, sagacity, and leadership—India did not lack any of these qualities. There was no dearth of soldiers either. But what the country lacked was ■ unity among the ruling princes of the time. Rivalry was rampant among them. Some of them did not mind appeasing the foreigners and enrolling their support in order to fight their native enemies. Besides, the British were superior in their arms and their army consisted of professional soldiers. The Indians were mostly common men, inspired

by an ideal, but not trained to fight.

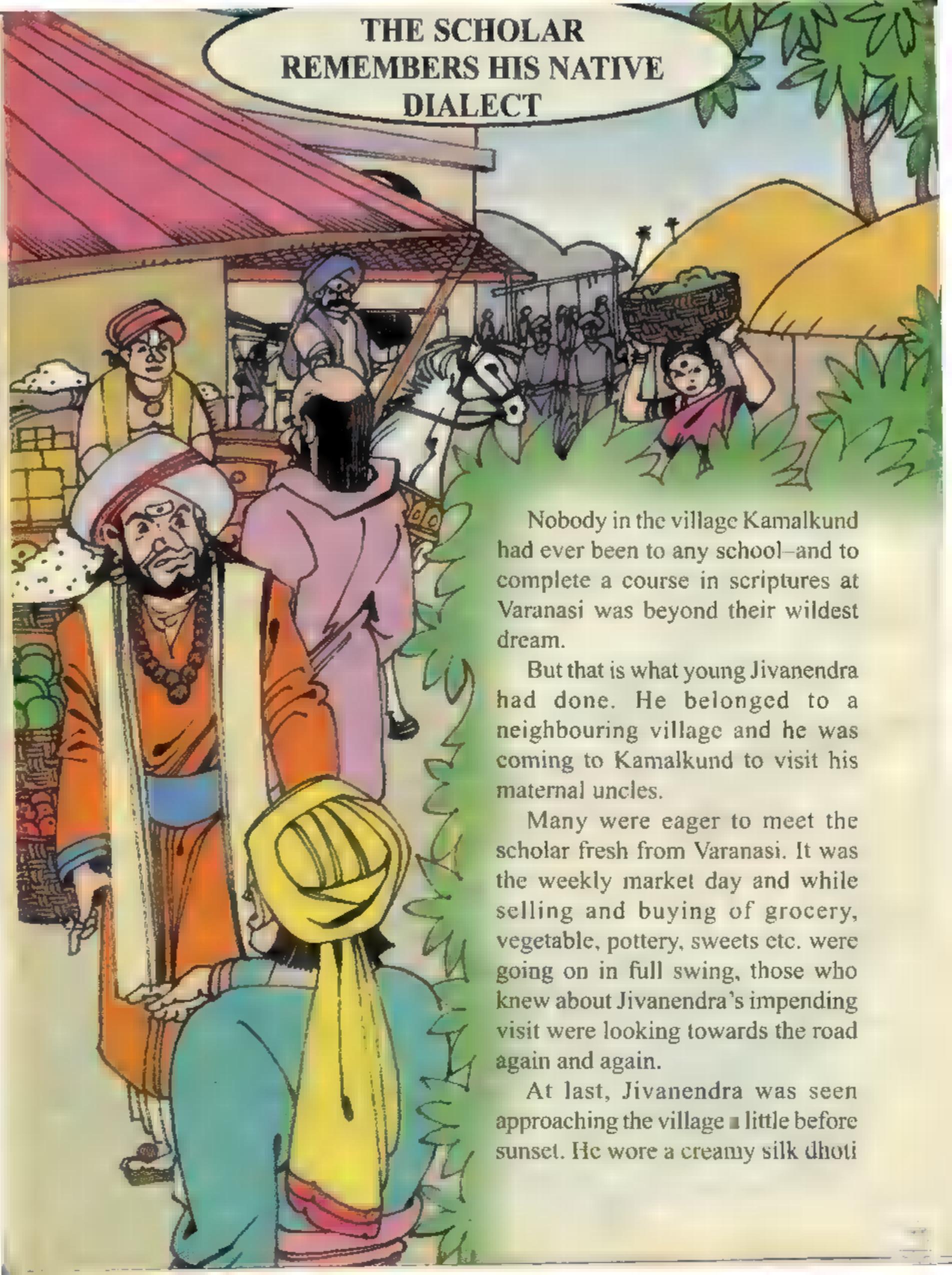
The captains and soldiers of the East India Company perpetrated ruthless brutalities on the Indians once the rebellion had ended. Thousands of innocent people were killed and hundreds of villages were reduced to ashes. Palaces and castles were plundered. The last Mughal ruler, Bahadurshah Zafar, who had lent his support to the rebellion, was captured and deported to Rangoon where he died, old and dejected.

However, the East India Company was taken to task by the leaders and people of Britain for its excesses, meanness, and mismanagement. The administration of India went over to the Crown. Queen Victoria announced amnesty and recognised the existing rights of the Indian princes.

(Concluded)



## THE SCHOLAR REMEMBERS HIS NATIVE DIALECT



Nobody in the village Kamalkund had ever been to any school—and to complete a course in scriptures at Varanasi was beyond their wildest dream.

But that is what young Jivanendra had done. He belonged to a neighbouring village and he was coming to Kamalkund to visit his maternal uncles.

Many were eager to meet the scholar fresh from Varanasi. It was the weekly market day and while selling and buying of grocery, vegetable, pottery, sweets etc. were going on in full swing, those who knew about Jivanendra's impending visit were looking towards the road again and again.

At last, Jivanendra was seen approaching the village ■ little before sunset. He wore a creamy silk dhoti

and a long shirt of dazzling orange colour. His well-cut beard matched his tarban. He looked more like a bridegroom than a scholar.

With a benign smile he blessed those who bowed to him, placing his right palm on their heads. At the same time he muttered some Sanskrit hymns which nobody understood but everybody appreciated because the feat spoke of his learning. To meet a learned man or to be familiar with him or to exchange a few words with him was an opportunity, after all.

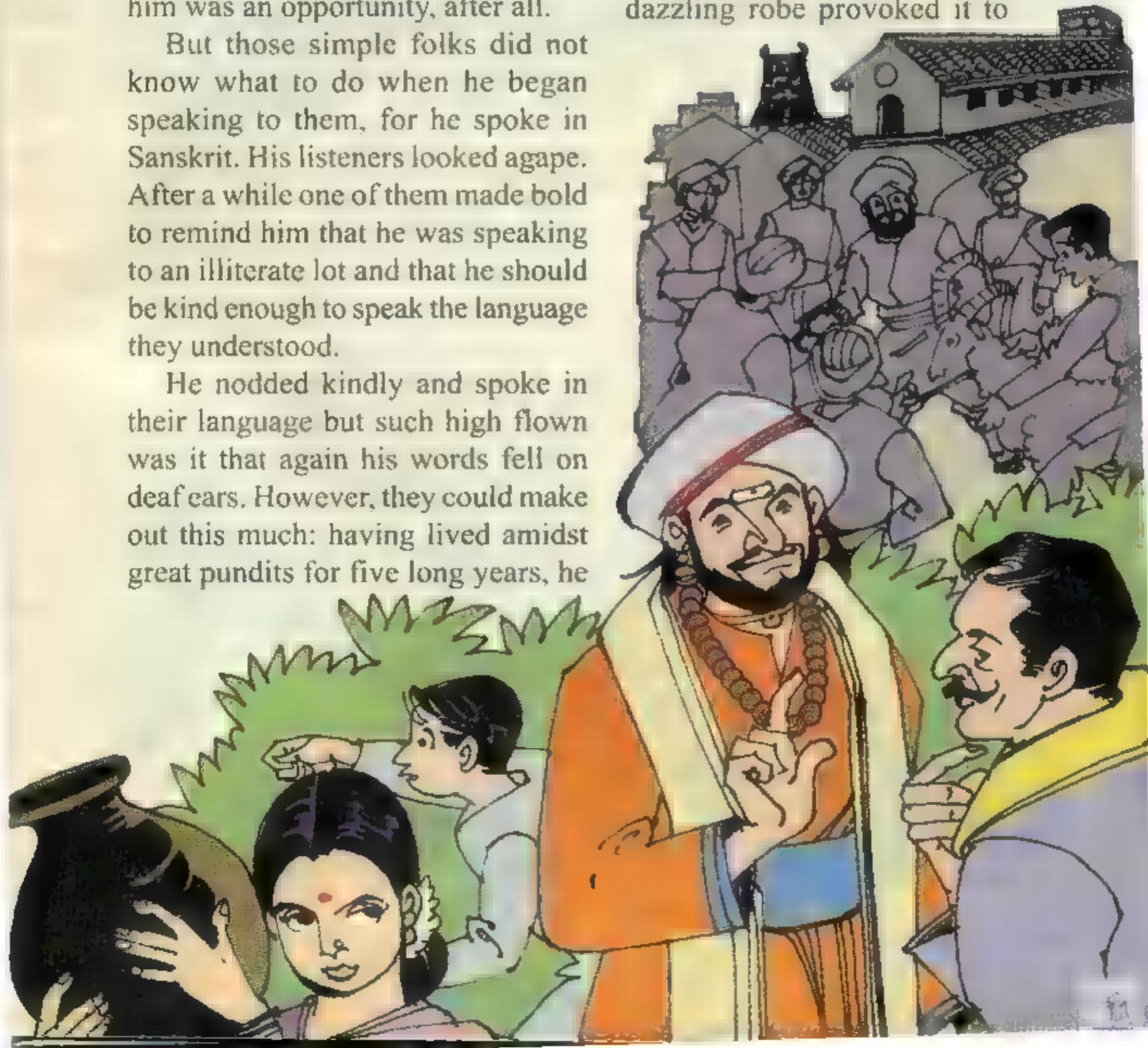
But those simple folks did not know what to do when he began speaking to them, for he spoke in Sanskrit. His listeners looked agape. After a while one of them made bold to remind him that he was speaking to an illiterate lot and that he should be kind enough to speak the language they understood.

He nodded kindly and spoke in their language but such high flown was it that again his words fell on deaf ears. However, they could make out this much: having lived amidst great pundits for five long years, he

found it difficult to speak like an ordinary man.

Some people in the audience were beginning to grow sceptic. Was a period of five years enough to make one forget the language or dialect of one's nativity?

A few yards away from the spot where the young scholar stood, some people were enjoying a fight between two rams. Suddenly, one of the fighting rams was attracted towards the scholar. Probably his dazzling robe provoked it to





challenge him instead of the other ram, for a change.

It headed towards him and taking position in front of him, lowered its head, preparing to charge at him.

But the young scholar, accustomed to bless any head that bowed to him, raised his right hand as a necessary gesture. Even though some anxious voices cautioned him to move aside, he did not pay heed to them and the next moment the ram gave him a lusty whack.

Falling flat, the scholar now instantly started abusing the animal in a dialect that everybody understood without the least difficulty. By the time he stood up and grew conscious that he had deviated from his form, it was too late.

“We are sorry that the naughty ram did not know how to behave with you, but we are also happy that you have not forgotten your native tongue altogether,” commented a witty man with a twinkle in his eyes.



*A wicked person, though powerless himself, instigates others to injure people. A piece of stone, itself incapable of cutting, whets the edge of a sword.*

—Subhasita Ratnabhandagaram

## IN QUEST OF THE BEAUTIFUL

There was once a woman who worked for the queen. The queen trusted her very much.

While sweeping the queen's room sometimes the woman would find pearls or gold beads which could have fallen from the queen's several necklaces and other jewellery. She faithfully restored them to the queen.

The queen was so pleased with her that she let her keep a few such precious things for herself.

The woman's little son lived at his maternal uncle's house in a distant village. It was because the uncle was a teacher and a number of boys lived with him for their education.

One day, the boy returned to his parents. At night he saw the pearls and the gold beads his mother had stored. "How beautiful these are!" he exclaimed, handling the glittering objects.

"They are beautiful, but, my son, only if you see the queen adorned with similar and more precious things, you'll know what true beauty is," commented

the boy's mother. "She is the most beautiful of anything I've known."

The boy fell silent and appeared absorbed in some thought. He was missing in the morning. The anxious parents began looking for him. The neighbours also joined them in their search helped of the boy. But he was not to be found.

Years later the mother received a message from her lost son: "Mother, I had heard from my uncle that the sun, the moon, the stars, the sky, were all ornaments of God. Your statement that while the ornaments were beautiful, the queen who put them on was much more beautiful, suddenly inspired in me a different urge. If the sun, the moon, the stars are so beautiful, how magnificent must be God whom they adorn! I went out in search of Him. You will be happy to learn that I have found Him. He is so magnificent that words cannot describe His charm."

The mother wept, but she was also happy that her son had achieved what only few could.



# THE TRUE MIRACLE

It was late one evening. A merchant locked the doors of his shop and turned to go home holding in his hand a small canvas bag containing the day's collection.

Suddenly a young man sprang up before him and snatched his bag and ran away.

The merchant as well as some passers-by gave a chase to the robber. He ran zigzag, but was caught before long.

He was dragged to the Kotwal or the Police Chief.

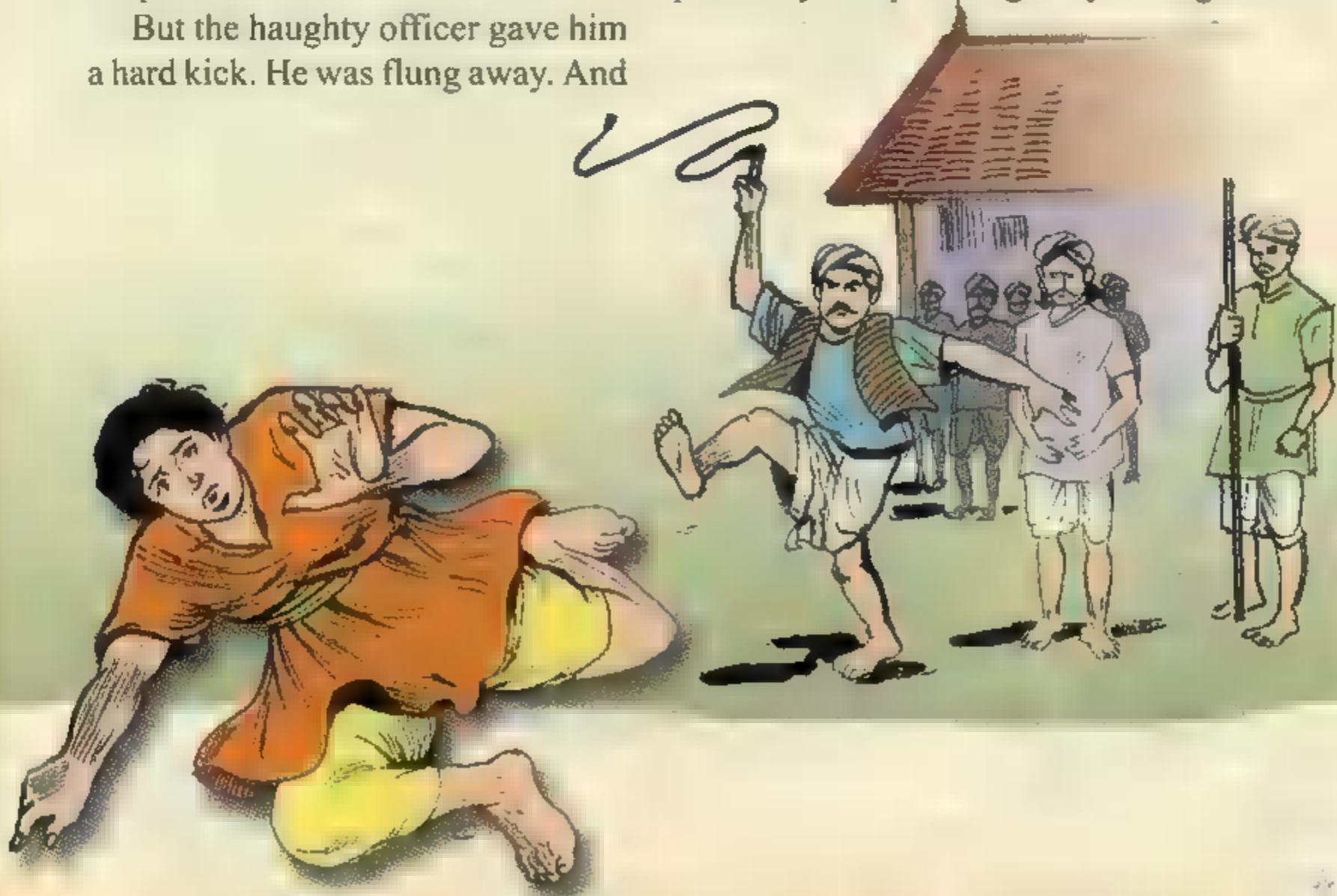
At once the young man caught hold of the Kotwal's feet and pleaded for pardon.

But the haughty officer gave him a hard kick. He was flung away. And

he decided not to let the opportunity slip by. He jumped and ran.

He was given a hot chase by the Kotwal's sepoys. By then it was quite dark. He changed his direction several times, successfully evading his pursuers.

He soon left the town behind and headed towards a forest. But before he could enter the forest, he heard the sound of heavy footsteps behind him. On one side of the road was a small hut. A ray of light from a cave fell on the road. The young man tried his best to reach it, but exhausted, he fell and fainted. The sepoys passed by his sprawling body, taking



no notice of it.

The hermit who lived in the cave carried the young man into his shelter and nursed him. He regained consciousness.

"I pray, kindly allow me to stay with you and serve you," said the young man. He thought that would be safe for him, because the sepoys would not ordinarily harass a hermit or his disciple.

The kind-hearted hermit accepted him as his disciple. The young man became a true devotee. The hermit taught him Yoga and meditation and gave him wisdom. In due course, he grew enlightened.

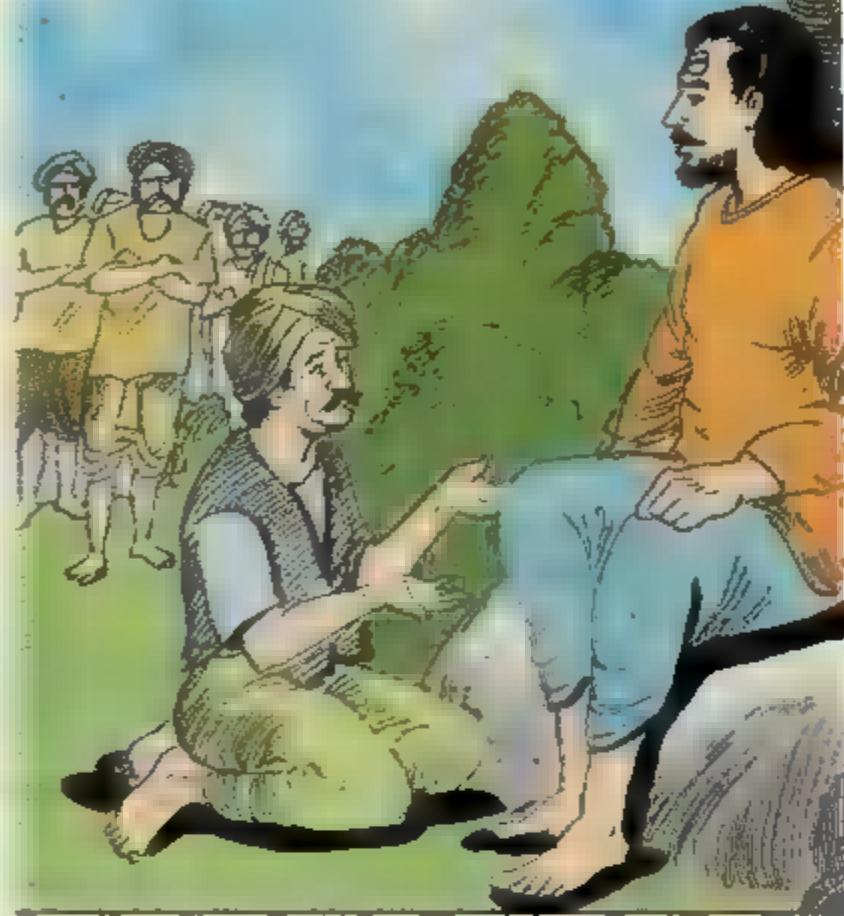
The hermit passed away after some years. But the disciple, who had become well-known as a hermit himself, continued to live there. He was widely respected.

One day, at the request of some of his disciples, he visited the town. A number of people came to meet him. They asked him several questions and he satisfied them with his simple answers.

A very old man, who sat listening to the hermit's discourse, at last bowed to him and said, "O sage, it'll be a miracle if I can come anywhere

*I consider him alone to be tranquil-minded who is free from passion in youth. Who does not attain quietude when the vital energy begins to decline (that is to say, when one is old)?*

—The Panchatantra



near God. I've lived a rather crude life. I was the Kotwal of this town."

"Miracles do happen, my friend! One day I had to hold your feet. Today you hold mine. Is not this a miracle? If a thief could be in God's mercy why cannot a thief-catcher?" asked the hermit laughing.

The old man sat puzzled. But the hermit did not hesitate to narrate to him the incident that had led him to become a hermit.

The old Kotwal hugged the hermit's feet once again and wept.



Chandamama

## ON THE BANKS OF THE KAVERI - IV

### The Shifting Sands

Text : Jayanthi Mahalingam

Illustrations : Goutam Sen

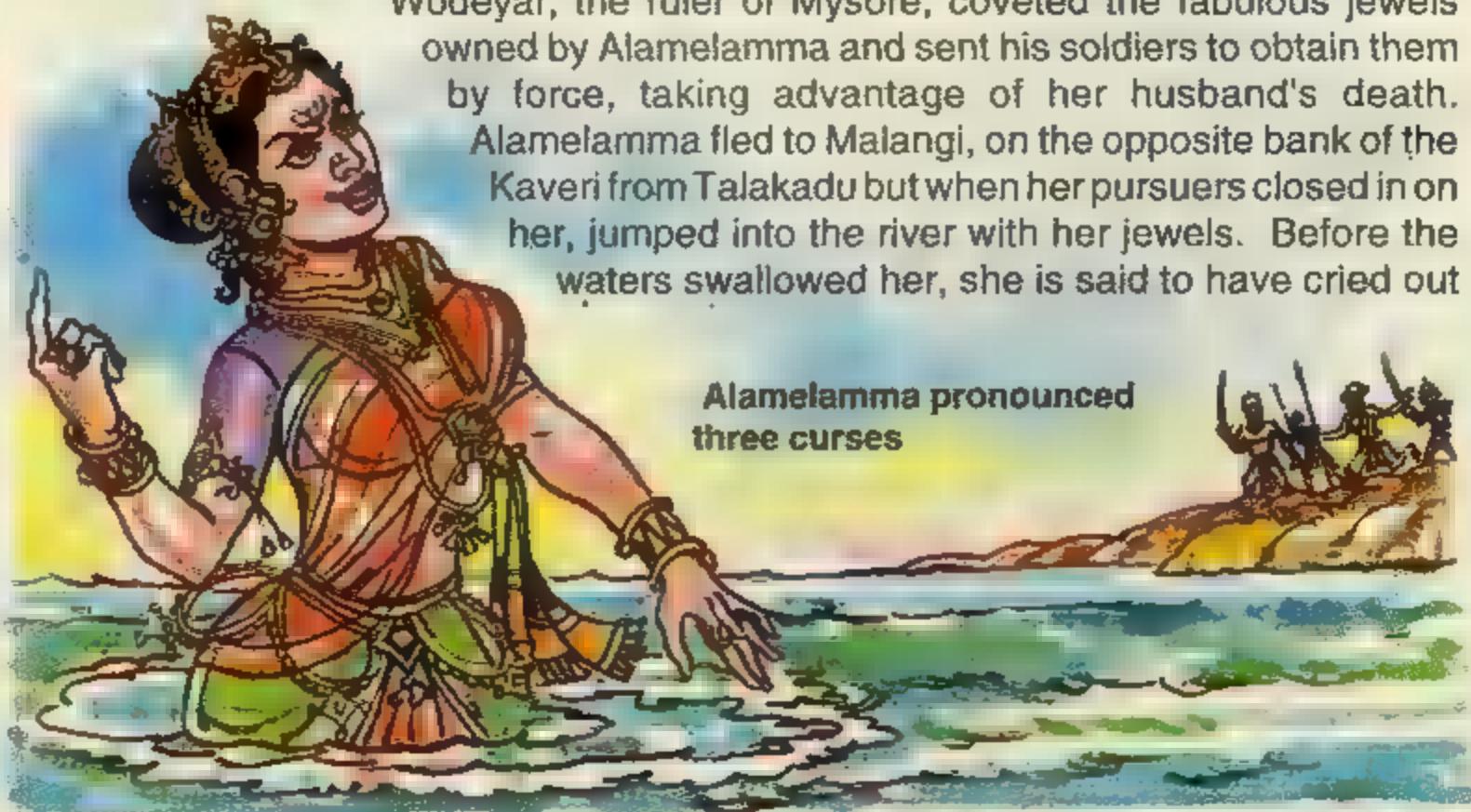
The Kaveri is joined by a tributary, the Kabini or Kapila, about 12 km south of Somanathapura. The town of Tirumakudlu Narasipura stands at the confluence. The name is a corruption of *Thiruma*(three) and *Kudulu*(confluence). The third is the Sphatika Sarovara, which is believed to be a subterranean lake.

T.Narasipura is a major pilgrimage centre, with a medieval temple dedicated to the sage Agastya.

Some distance away from T.Narasipura, on the left bank of the Kaveri, is the desolate, sand-blown town of Talakadu. Once it was the thriving capital of the Ganga dynasty. Then came the Cholas, who named it Rajarajapuram, and then the Hoysalas under Vishnuvardhana. But now, Talakadu lies buried under huge moving sand dunes, that are as high as 15m in places. According to a semi-historical story, Talakadu's fate is due to a curse pronounced on the city by Alamelamma, the widow of Tirumalaraya, the last viceroy of the Vijayanagara king in Srirangapatna. Raja

Wodeyar, the ruler of Mysore, coveted the fabulous jewels owned by Alamelamma and sent his soldiers to obtain them by force, taking advantage of her husband's death.

Alamelamma fled to Malangi, on the opposite bank of the Kaveri from Talakadu but when her pursuers closed in on her, jumped into the river with her jewels. Before the waters swallowed her, she is said to have cried out



Alamelamma pronounced three curses



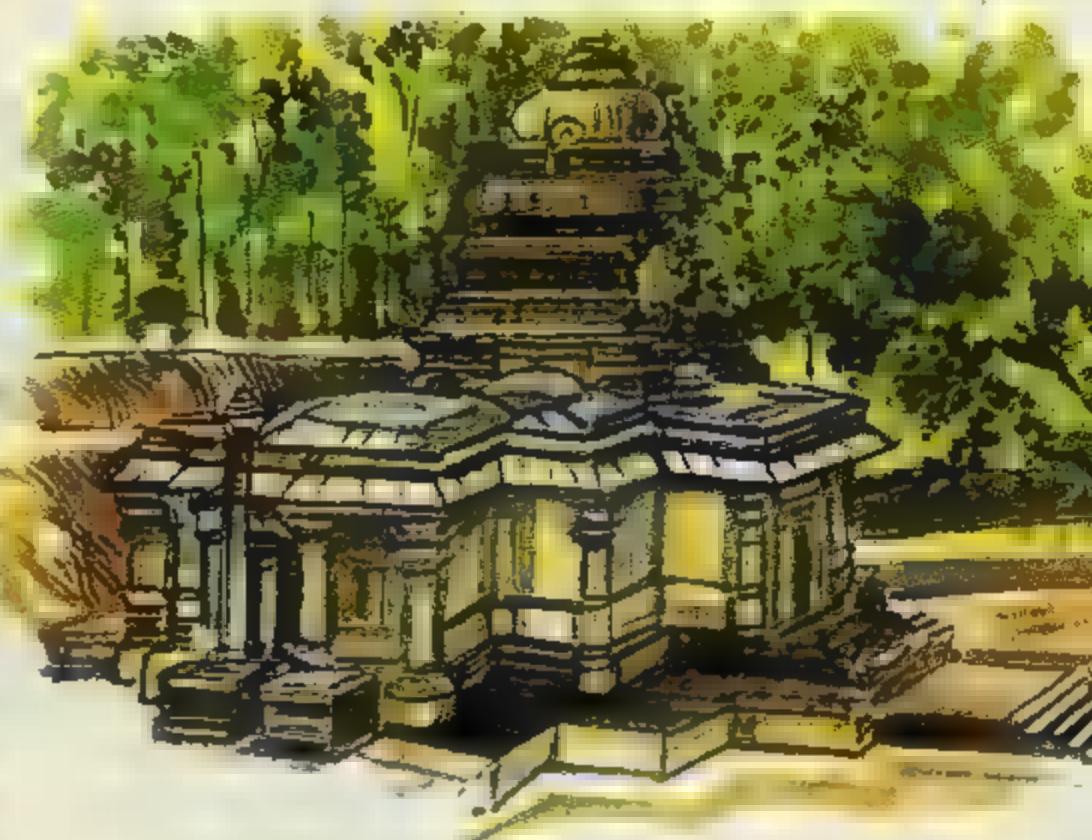
aloud: "May Talakadu be always covered with sand; may there always be a whirlpool in the Kaveri at Malangi and may the kings of Mysore always remain without heirs!"

The locals fearfully point out that the curse has come true: Talakadu has mysteriously been covered by sand, there is a whirlpool at Malangi and the family tree of the Mysore rulers shows a large number of adopted heirs. It is believed that there are thirty temples submerged in the sea of sand. The temples which are still visible above ground are the Pataleshwara and Maruleshwara(built by the Gangas), the Keertinarayana(Hoysalas) and the Vaidyeshwara(Cholas).

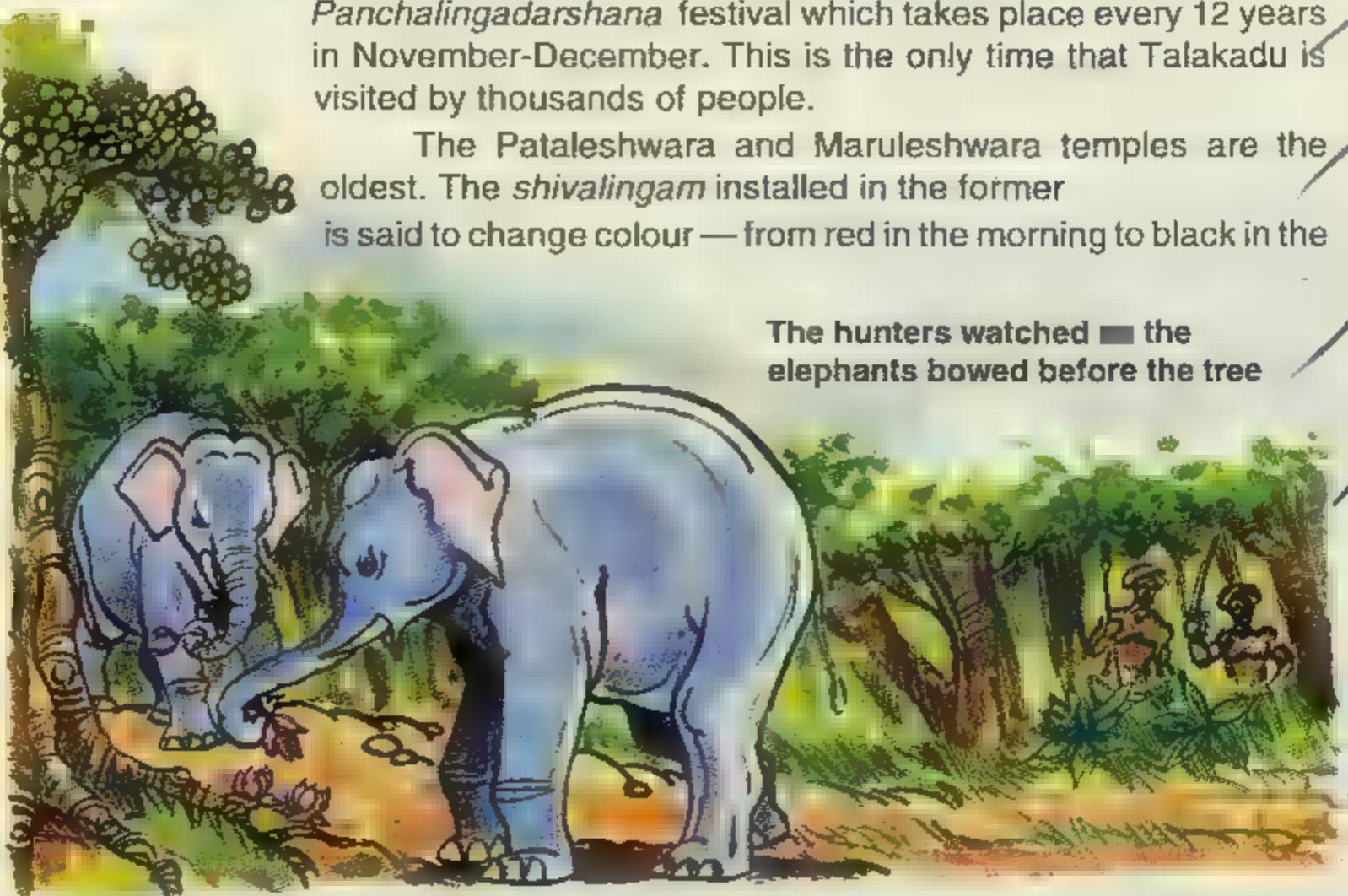
*Puja* is still conducted in these temples, especially during the *Panchalingadarshana* festival which takes place every 12 years in November-December. This is the only time that Talakadu is visited by thousands of people.

The Pataleshwara and Maruleshwara temples are the oldest. The *shivalingam* installed in the former is said to change colour — from red in the morning to black in the

Vaidyeshwara temple, Talakadu



The hunters watched ■ the elephants bowed before the tree



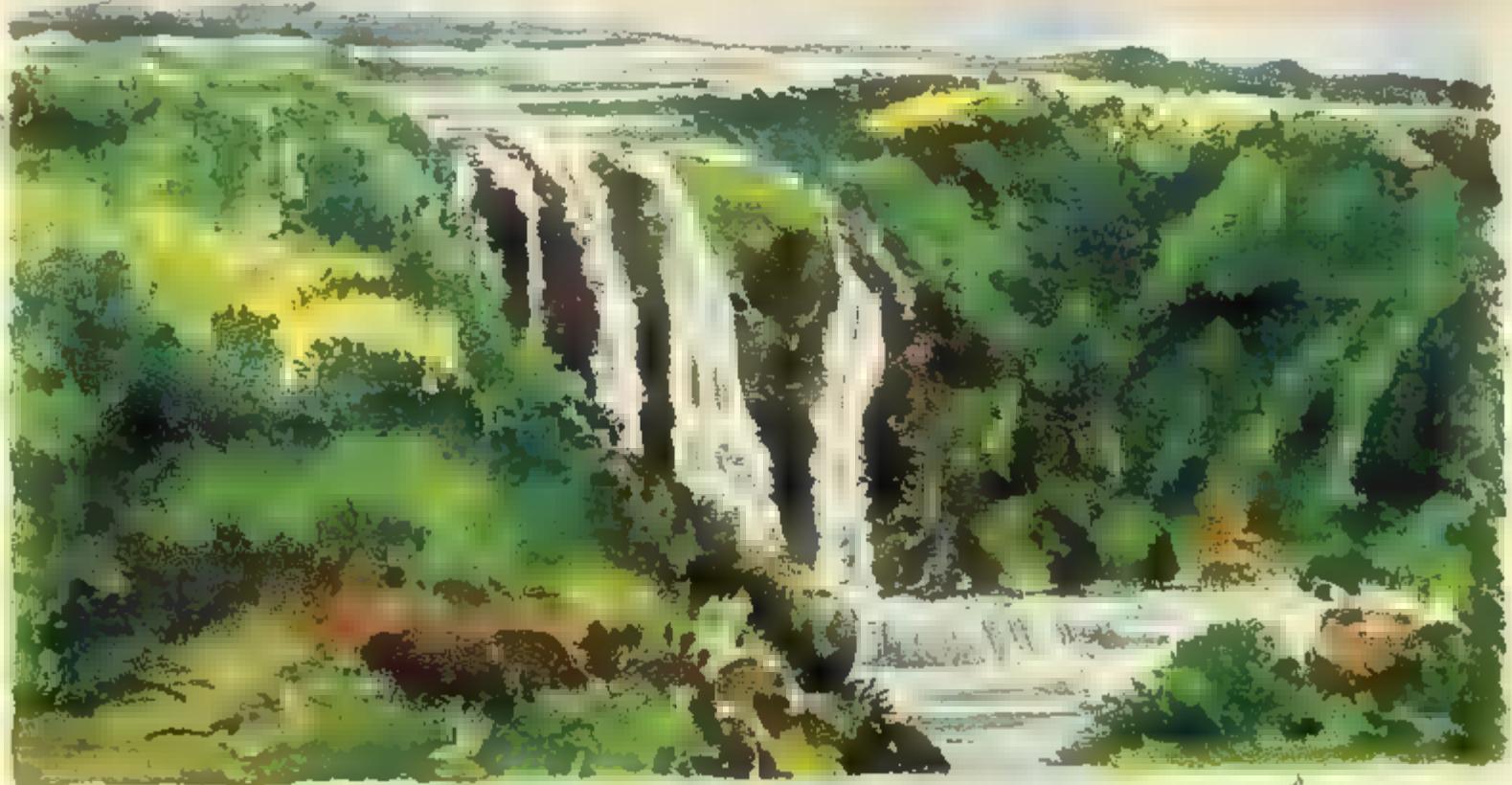
afternoon to white in the evening.

The Keertinarayana temple has a 3-m-tall idol of Vishnu, which is still in worship.

The largest and most ornate temple in Talakadu is dedicated to Shiva as Vaidyeshwara or the Lord of Healing. Though the temple seems to have been built in the 14th century, a *puranic* legend suggests an earlier date. According to the story, a sage named Somadatta and his disciples, while doing penance on the banks of the Kaveri to propitiate Shiva, were killed by wild elephants before they could complete their spiritual quest. They were reborn as elephants in the same forest. To help them, Shiva took the form of a *lingam* buried beneath a silk cotton tree. The elephants would bathe in the Kaveri and offer lotuses at the foot of the tree every morning. This ritual was observed by two hunters named Tala and Kada. Curious, they tried to cut the tree down, but at the first blow of the axe, the tree began to bleed. A voice instructed them to dress the wound with the leaves and fruits of the same tree. When the hunters obeyed, the blood turned to milk, which they and the elephants drank and became immortal. Later, a temple was built around the *shivalingam* and the place came to be called Talakadu after the hunters!

Though the forest department has planted trees to prevent the desert from advancing; it is still encroaching at the rate of 3 m a year. The source of the sand is the Kaveri itself. All the silt and sand deposited in the river bed and on the banks during the dry summer months is blown on to the city by the winds of the southwest monsoon. The river may also have changed its course many times in the past, leaving the sand behind. Whatever may be the reason, the curse or nature's course, Talakadu is today a rarely-visited, almost forgotten city.





### Gagana Chukki Falls

About 25 km north of Talakadu, the Kaveri forms the second major island on its course - Shivasamudram. A tributary named Shimsha joins the Kaveri here. The temple to Ranganatha or Vishnu is called *Madhyaranga*. The densely-forested island, which is 4.8 km long and 1.2 km wide, can be reached from the mainland by the 474-m-long Lushington Bridge, an arched stone bridge which is more than 150 years old. The Kaveri encircles the island, the two branches of the river plunging down a height of about a hundred metres. The western branch of the river tumbles down a gorge from a height of 90 m (the Gagana Chukki) and the eastern branch has a descent of 69 m (Bhara Chukki). The Kaveri Falls, as the two cataracts are known, are situated amidst a lush, verdant landscape which makes it an enchanting spot for picnickers and tourists alike.

Shivasamudram holds the distinction of being the site of India's first hydro-electric power station built in 1902. It was set up mainly to supply power to the Kolar goldmines 147 km away, making the 78 kv transmission line the longest in the world at the time. In fact, when the Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu was being constructed in the 1930's, the power was supplied from Shivasamudram. The place where the power station is located is called the 'Bluff', literally meaning a cliff with a broad, perpendicular face. The 135 m high bluff was ideal for laying the hydraulic pipes feeding the turbines in the generator. The station itself is named after K.Seshadri Iyer, the Dewan of Mysore from 1883-1901, during whose tenure the hydel project was implemented. The total capacity of Shivasamudram is 42,000 kw. Visitors can travel a dizzying 435 m down in a trolley and see the working of the station.

The grandeur of the Gagana Chukki falls can be best viewed from behind the tomb or *dargah* of the Muslim savant Peer Haibe, which glistens like a jewel in the lap of green around it. The Shimsha hydel station is also visible from here. The two arms of the Kaveri unite once more at Sathegala in the north-east.



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**M**any, many centuries ago there was a mighty monarch named Dambodbhava. He was endowed with many merits, but he had one weakness. He desired to be acknowledged by every body as the greatest man on the earth.

"Tell me, my wise ministers and courtiers and ambassadors from our friendly lands, tell me if you know of anybody who is greater or more powerful than I!"

This was the first thing he would say in his court, as he sat down on his throne.

Who would like to say anything to displease him? It was so easy and safe for them to say in a chorus, "None, O King, none!"

That would make Dambodbhava very pleased.

But, one day, a sage who travelled into his land told him: "There are two men, Nara and Narayana, who are the greatest among all the mortals!" The sage also told the surprised king where

to find the two.

The king marched to meet the two strange men. He was accompanied by a large army. On reaching his destination, he was terribly disappointed to find two men, lean and thin, seated on the top of a mountain, engrossed in meditation.

Having come all the way, the king did not like to go back without at least humiliating the two men who were the cause for his long travel. But however much he tried to annoy or provoke the two men, he failed to achieve his end. That angered the king even more, and he heaped abuses on them.

At last, when his two innocent victims understood that he would not leave them easily, one of them, Nara, picked up a handful of grass and threw the tiny stalks towards the king's army. At once the soldiers lost their sight and were disfigured, too!

Dambodbhava realised how ineffective his kingly power was before the spiritual power of the two sages. He fell at their feet and sincerely repented for his pride. Nara and Narayana pardoned him and advised him to rule his subjects with compassion and rule his own passions with humility.

The king followed their advice.





## THE VIRAGO OF VEERPURI

*The story so far: Prime Minister Bodheshwar's daughter, Bhanupriya, is almost certain that Princess Vairamukhi is an imposter and she could be the missing Vajreshwari, daughter of the late commander-in-chief. She takes into confidence Vijaykrishna, the missing girl's brother. As he is about to leave for the borders carrying important messages for the king, he rushes out after assuring her that he would convey her misgivings about the princess to Prince Veersen and ask him ■ take great care of himself. There have already been two deaths in the kingdom under mysterious circumstances—of Queen Suryaprabha and Commander Marthand Varma. Is Prince Veersen's life in danger? Now read on...*

After Vijaykrishna had cast a doubt about Princess Vairamukhi, Prince Veersen very much wanted to get at the truth, by confronting the princess herself in her apartments. But he did not wish to catch her unawares by barging into her room. After all, wasn't she a royal guest at the palace? He sent a messenger to find out her convenience. The girl came back and said the princess was not feeling well. She had cancelled her usual morning visit to the temple of Bhuvaneswari, and that she would see him after she returned from the Kali temple in the evening. 'But why does she want to see me in *my* apartment?' wondered the prince, without arriving at ■ plausible answer.

Veersen got ready to proceed to the Prime Minister's residence for

the daily meeting. But Bodheswar was already in the palace waiting for an audience with him. What urgency would have brought the Prime Minister to the palace? Veersen wondered. He hurried to meet Bodheswar who was waiting for him. He appeared quite agitated.

"What's this I hear, Prince?" Bodheshwar could not hide his anxiety and worry. "Vairamukhi is not any princess? Then who is she? Why should she continue to stay in the palace?"

The prince held him by his shoulders and slowly made him sit down in a chair. "Did Vijaykrishna meet you before he went away?" asked Veersen.

"No, I didn't meet him after he took leave of me yesterday," replied Bodheshwar, now calming down. "It



was Priya who told me that the princess could be the missing Vajreshwari. She had happened to see a mole on the princess's shoulders and the girl remembered to have seen a similar birthmark on Vajreshwari. You know, they used to play together as children."

"Vijaykrishna didn't tell me all that," said Veersen. "He merely conveyed Bhanupriya's doubts. After all, Vajreshwari was his sister and he had been, like all others, equally anxious of her whereabouts."

"When she talked to me, Priya appeared quite concerned about you, as the king is still away and Vijaykrishna, too, is absent from the kingdom. That's why I decided to come to the palace instead of waiting for you. Tell me, where's the princess? For how long is she going to stay here?"

"I wanted to find that out from

her," replied Veersen. "When I sent a messenger to her, she came back and told me that Vairamukhi is unwell. But she wants to see me in the evening in my apartment. So, I didn't want to bother her. To be frank, one day, soon after my mother's death, she did express a desire to return to Mahendragiri, but I myself told her that she need not go back in a hurry. You know the Queen had great affection for her."

"Did you say she wants to...meet....to meet you in *your* chambers?" said the Prime Minister, slowly measuring his words. "Has she ever done that before?"

"No!" the prince replied.

"Strange! But what will be her motive or purpose?" the Prime Minister prodded him.

"Maybe she has decided to depart and wants to bid farewell of me," said Veersen plainly.

"If that is so, then it is good for our kingdom!" said Bodheshwar.

"But, sir, if she is holding any clue about the existence of Vajreshwari, we must get at the truth from the princess herself."

"Then, I think, you'd better talk to Priya and find out what more she knows about the princess," said the Prime Minister. "I shall wait for you at my place."

At the Prime Minister's residence, Bodheshwar himself received him. "You meet Priya first and we will

have our discussions later."

Prince Veersen went to where Bhanupriya was waiting for him. "Where's Bhanumathi?" he asked of her.

"She is meeting the gardener, and will soon join us," said Bhanupriya, hastily adding, "by the way, I haven't told her anything, my fear about the princess."

"Till your father told me, I never knew how you got suspicious of Vairamukhi," said Veersen. "How did you happen to see the mole on her?"

Bhanupriya told him of the fateful day when the prince had escorted Princess Vairamukhi to their residence, how she learnt playing *shatranj*, and how Bhanumathi used to keep her engaged in the game. As she herself was not playing, she was standing behind Vairamukhi watching her moves, when one end of her sari fell revealing her neck and shoulders. When she saw the mole, she suddenly remembered the birthmark on Vajreshwari. She was sure it could not be a coincidence that Vairamukhi had a similar birthmark and, if she remembered correctly, at the same spot on the shoulders.

"But all this happened some days ago, Bhanupriya," chided the prince. "Why didn't you tell me earlier?"

"At that time I wasn't sure," said Bhanupriya apologetically. "I waited for another opportunity to make sure that I haven't made a mistake, but that

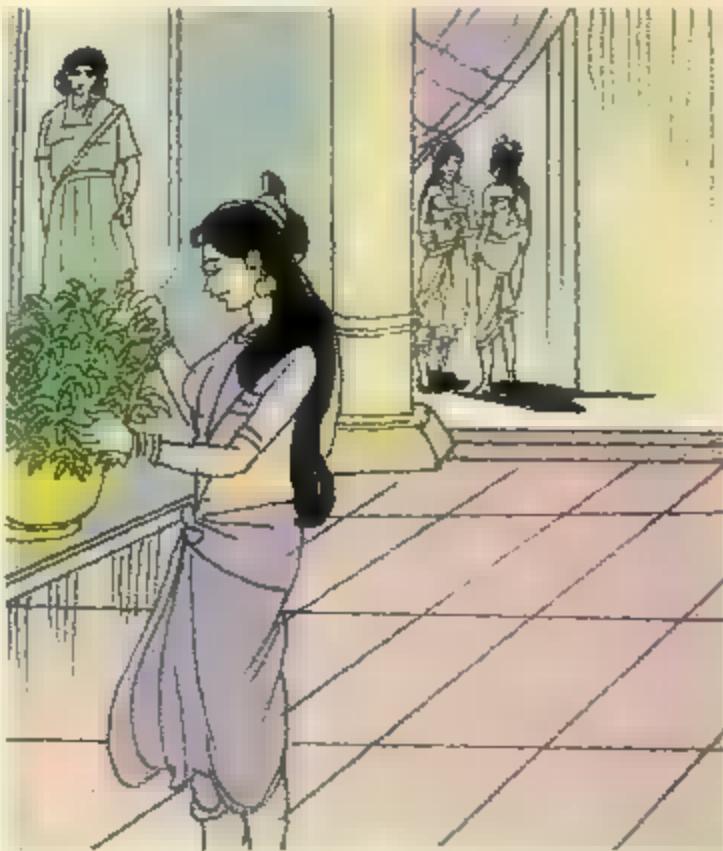


opportunity never came. I very much wanted to tell you but couldn't muster enough courage to say all this. However, when I met Vijaykrishna, I could not resist the temptation of telling him about my find... his long lost sister."

"What made you ask Vijay to tell me that I should be careful?"

"Prince! If, she is really Vajreshwari, she should be staying in her own residence, where she had grown up along with Vijay. Instead of that, why should she pose as a princess and remain at the palace indefinitely unless she has some motive? Remember, we had two mysterious deaths, of your mother the Queen, and her brother, the army commander. Prince, believe me, I am really afraid of your safety. Suppose she..."

Before she could complete the sentence, Bhanumathi breezed into



the room, holding some flowers in her hand. "Prince! Just wait till I arrange them in a vase, and then we shall have a game."

"I haven't yet had my usual meeting with your father, so you'll have to wait till I'm free," said the prince, rising from his seat.

Their discussions over, it was time for the prince to go. "Priya tells me that Bhanumathi and the princess have become close friends," said Bodheswar. "So she has not shared her doubts about Vairamukhi with her. Let it be. After she leaves Veerpuri, and I hope she will, soon, we shall take Bhanumathi into confidence. Let me also repeat Priya's request to you ... take good care of yourself!"

"Please don't have any fear about me, sir," said the prince. "I'm not apprehending any danger from the

princess. A pious woman like her cannot do any harm. We shall send her back to Mahendragiri with a proper escort. Please tell Bhanumathi that I shall spare sometime for her tomorrow."

"Take care, Prince!" Bodheswar said, as Veersen mounted his horse and galloped away.

Sometime later, a guard rushed into his room and said: "O Prince! Princess Vairamukhi is missing! The three women who had accompanied her to the temple have come back crying. One of them has gone to the princess apartments; the other two are waiting for an audience."

"Go and bring them here immediately!" Prince Veersen commanded.

When they were brought to him, he found them in tears and greatly agitated. "Shalini! What happened? Where's the Princess, Malini?"

"O Prince, we don't know where she is! After she had had her worship, she came out and sat beneath the banyan tree, as was her wont, for meditation. We were somewhere behind the tree, not wanting to disturb her. When we went back to tell her it was getting dark and time to return, she was not there! We called out for her and searched all over the place. But there was no trace of her! We then hurried back. Her maid Ragini has gone to find out whether the princess has returned of

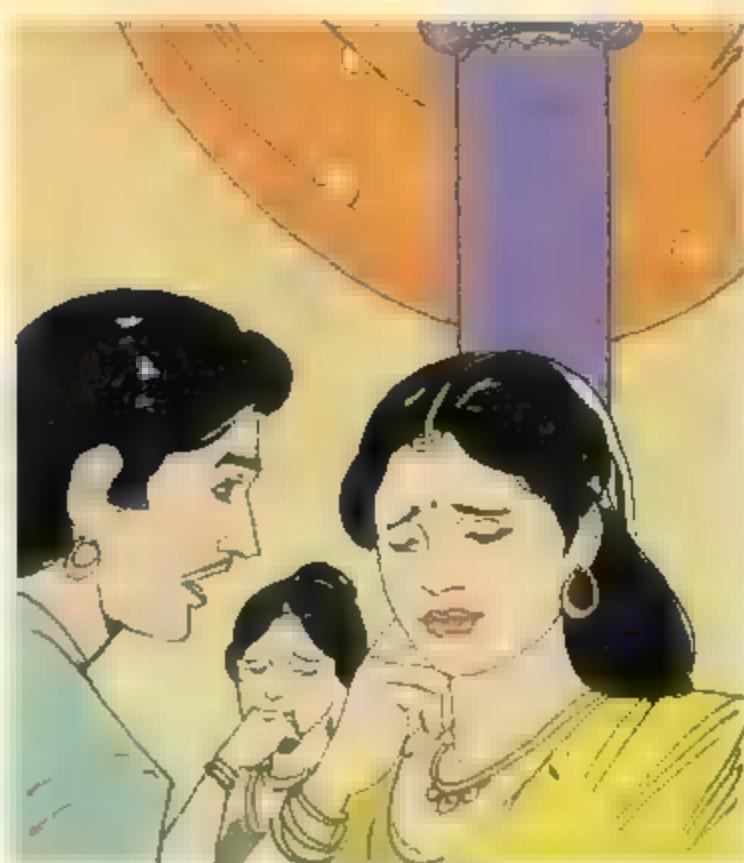
her own. We don't think she's in her apartments either. What shall we do?"

"Go back to Ragini and remain with her," said Veersen. "She'll be feeling bad about the incident. Try to pacify her. We shall have our soldiers search for the princess. They'll certainly find her. I only hope her life is not in danger!"



After an unusually long worship, Princess Vairamukhi came out of the temple and headed for the banyan tree and sat in meditation. Ragini and her two companions quietly withdrew from her presence and stood a little away, chatting. It was past dusk and the place was slowly getting enveloped in darkness.

Vairamukhi sat up as she heard Raja's voice: "Don't go back to the palace. My men are waiting behind the temple. They will take you to the prince. I'm glad you haven't forgotten to carry the dagger you found underneath your pillow. Engage the prince in conversation and strike before the gong strikes twelve! You've succeeded in your mission on both occasions earlier. There's no reason why you should not succeed again. Wish you well, Vairamukhi. When the mission is achieved, you will not stay in the palace any longer. My men will be around, waiting for you, and they will bring you back here. Remember, a



rich reward is awaiting you, Vairamukhi. You'll be the real princess of Mahendragiri! Now go!" The voice trailed off.

Vairamukhi got up. Though it was already dark, she could see the three figures huddled together in gossip. She quietly moved out. No, they had not noticed her. She quietly went behind the temple and before she searched for Raja's men, they stepped forward and touched her hands. They wore masks over their heads. They blindfolded her and said, "Come with us, Princess." As she walked away, she could hear the cries: "Princess! Where are you? Princess Vairamukhi! Where are you?"



Prince Veersen sent for the captain of the army and asked him to send out his men to search for the Princess. "Let them fan out and comb all

possible places. She is our royal guest, and no bodily harm should come to her!"

After the captain had gone away, he began pacing up and down his room, in a pensive mood. True, he too had noticed some similarity between Viramukhi and Vajreshwari but had not given much thought to it, especially because his mother, the Queen, who gave her longer company every day had not expressed any doubt or suspicion. After some time, he sent for the Princess personal maid, Ragini. Through sobs, she said she had no idea where Vairamukhi might have gone, anyway not to Mahendragiri as she would need someone to escort her. The girl was almost sure the Princess would visit the temple of Bhuvaneswari the next morning if she was anywhere in Veerpuri. Ragini then went back to her room.

The time was now nearing midnight. Neither the captain nor any of his soldiers had returned with some news of the missing princess.

Veersen decided to wait for some more time before retiring for the night. When he felt that sleep was slowly overtaking him, he shook his head to remain awake. Suddenly he heard a woman's voice: "Prince! Shall we have a game of *shatranj*?"

Veersen turned round to see Princess Vairamukhi by his side. She wore an innocent, but captivating smile. "Princess! You are here, at this hour?"

"Why? Didn't you get my message that I would meet you in your apartment?" said the Princess. "I waited for the most auspicious hour, that's all!"

"But, isn't it time to go to bed, princess?" protested Veersen, deliberately desisting from asking her where she had been all the while. She was back in the palace and whatever had happened earlier was not of any concern. He would ensure that she did not go out of the palace, except when he was ready to send her back to Mahendragiri.

"No!" Vairamukhi replied, "I want



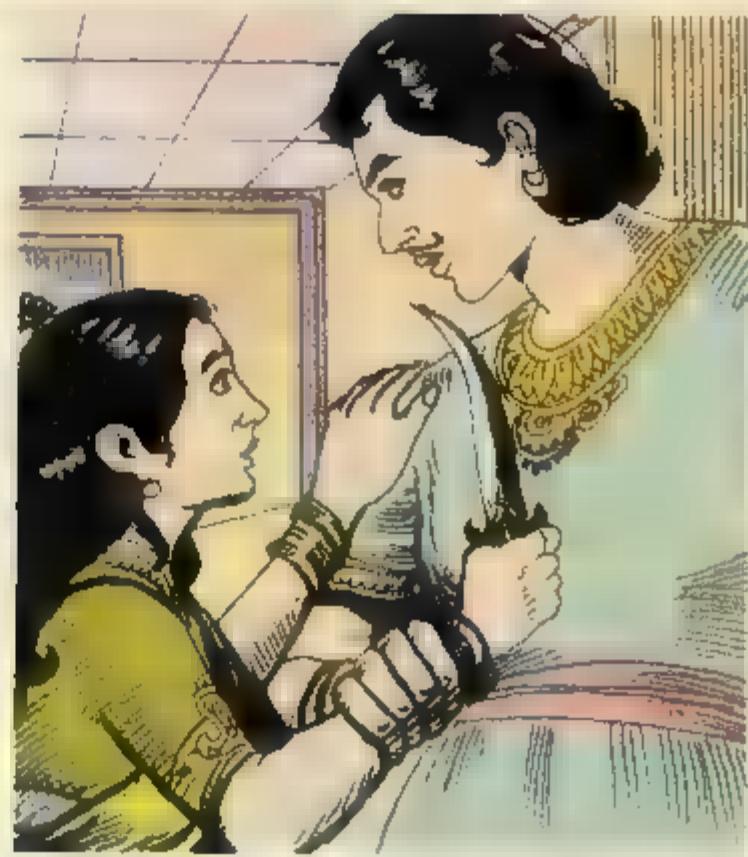
to talk to you, Prince, but we'll talk while we have a game. Ready?"

Prince Veersen thought that would give him time to muster his thoughts and plan a strategy and also listen to whatever Vairamukhi wanted to tell him. He reached for a shatranj board and some beautifully carved figures. "What lovely pieces, Prince!" remarked Vairamukhi, as she set her side.

One of the pieces fell down, and the princess leaned to pick it up from the floor. One end of her sari fell down, revealing her bare shoulders. Then Veersen saw the mole and his face went pale. He caught hold of her hand. "Princess! Tell me the truth! Aren't you really Vajreshwari?"

Vairamukhi jerked free her hand and jumped up. She held a shining dagger in her hand and lunged forward to stab Veersen, who was still seated. "Vajreshwari! What is this? Why do you want to kill me?" he almost shouted as he caught hold of her hand once again and pressed it hard. The princess let go the dagger with a clang. By now Veersen, too, had got up from his seat, only to see the Princess shivering all over and sliding to the floor. She was sobbing, uncontrollably.

Prince Veersen took pity on her and helped her to rise and be seated. "Vajreshwari! Now tell me everything. Why did you pose as a princess?"



"Forgive me, O Prince!" pleaded Vairamukhi.

"Don't call me prince!" said Veersen. "Remember, Vajreshwari, not long ago we were playmates."

"I was not myself, Veer!" responded Vairamukhi. "The day I lost my way in the forest, I came under the spell of Raja of Mahendragiri. It was he who called me Vairamukhi, promising to make me a real princess. But before I became one, he made use of me for carrying out his wishes." Suddenly, she became alert as she thought she heard shuffling footsteps. "Three masked men of Raja had brought me here, Veer!" she added almost in a whisper.

Veersen got up and went up to the corridor, and came back. "There's no one, Vajreshwari."

By then she had picked up the

dagger, which she coolly placed on a nearby table. "He wanted me to kill you, and if I had done that, it would have been the third murder I would have been responsible for. But, believe me, Veer, I didn't myself kill your mother or your uncle who was my father."

"Ah! Raja of Mahendragiri?" exclaimed Veersen. "But he fell off his horse and broke his legs. Why did he want my mother and uncle assassinated?"

Vajreshwari then slowly pieced together the mysterious story of the two princes of Mahendrapuri-Pratapchandra, the elder who suffered a physical defect, and Vinaychandra, who succeeded their father Kirtichandra, but who became a recluse. Pratapchandra virtually ruled the kingdom, calling himself Raja. Suryaprabha was betrothed to him before the accident, and was later married to Soorasen of Veerpuri, father of Veersen. Raja thus nursed a grudge against Veerpuri and its queen. Her brother, Marthand Varma, was to be his second victim. If he could get at Prince Veersen, too, then the entire family would have been

wiped out. And who else would be the best to help him achieve his ambition other than Vajreshwari?

By the time Prince Veersen and Vajreshwari unravelled the mystery, it was nearing dawn. The soldiers who went up to the borders in search of Princess Vairamukhi had conveyed the news to King Soorasen and Vijaykrishna, who decided to rush back to the capital. Their arrival was heralded by the buglers at the palace gates.

Prince Veersen led Vajreshwari to the portico where he greeted his father. Turning to Vijay, he said, "Here's Vajreshwari, your long-lost sister!"

"So, she isn't Princess Vairamukhi?" remarked Vijaykrishna.

"No, not any longer!" said Veersen. "But then, that's a long story, Vijay. For the time being, be happy that I'm alive."

Before he could proceed further, Vajreshwari playfully put a finger on his lips. "Thank the divine mother Bhuvaneswari that the day did not dawn when Veerpuri would have called me a virago!"

(Concluded)



# STORY OF THE MAHABHARATA

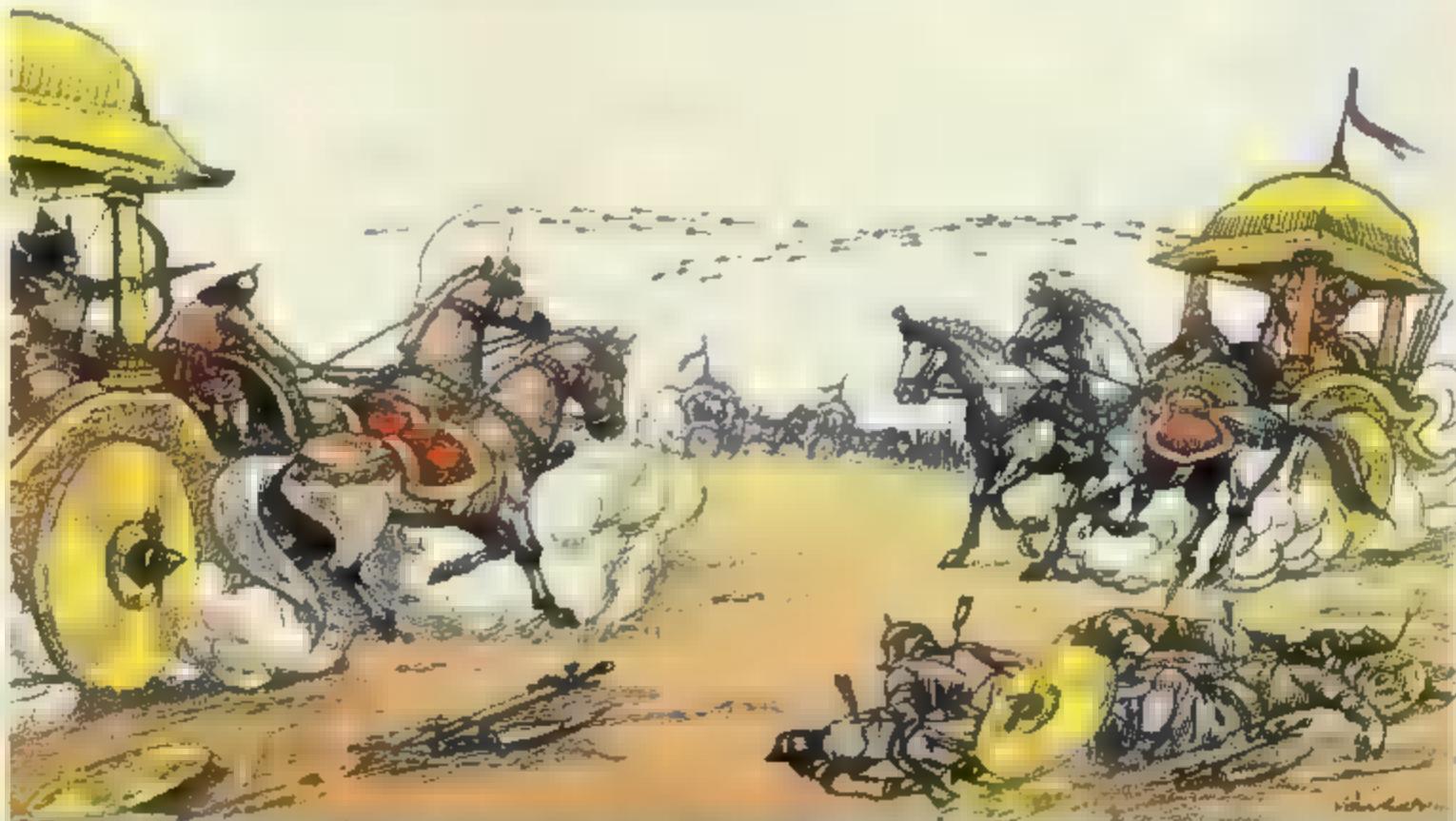
*The story so far: The great war between the Pandavas and the Kauravas is on. To check the onward march of the Kaurava armies, Abhimanyu goes forward to challenge Bhishma, the grand old man of the dynasty and the general of the Kauravas.*

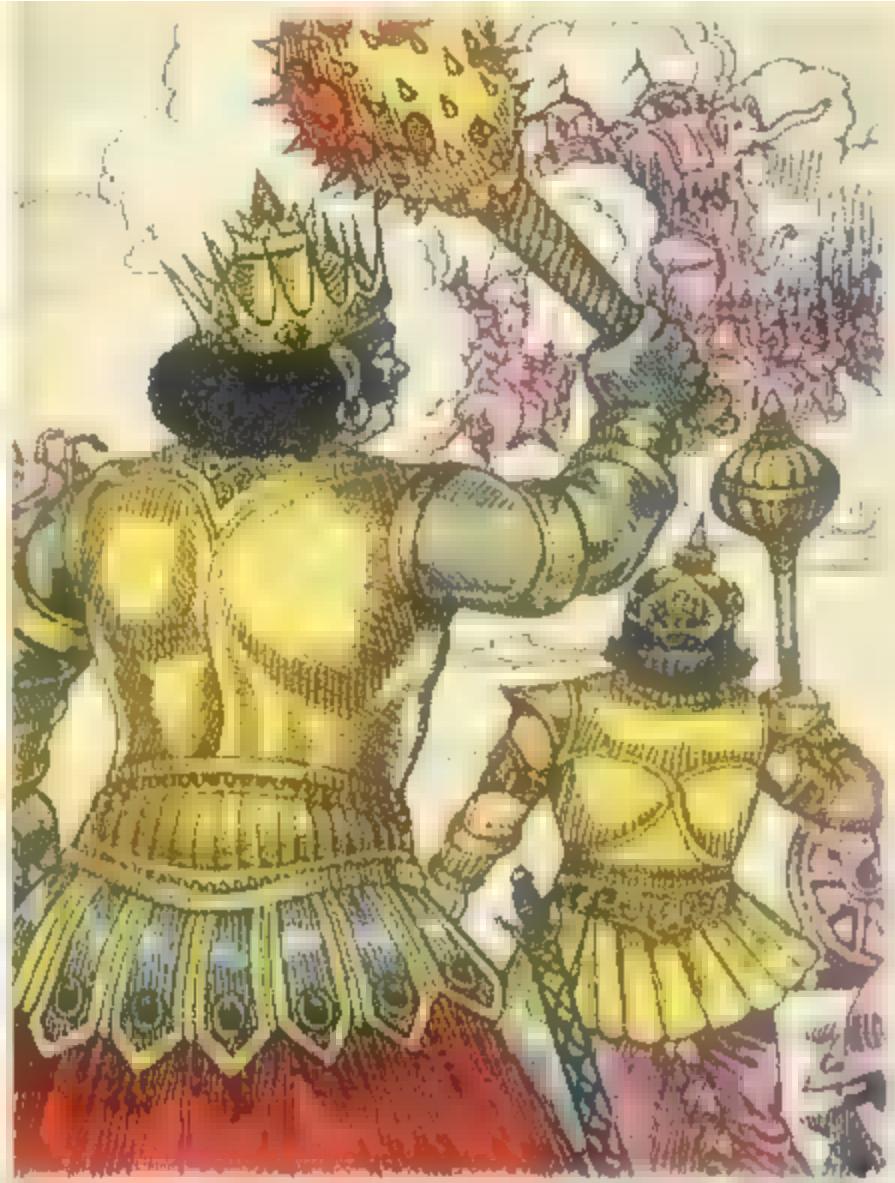
It was the afternoon of the second day of the war. Aswasthama, Kripa, and Salya fought fiercely against Dhristadyumna and Abhimanyu. Duryodhana's son Lakshana attacked Abhimanyu. But he was no match for the prodigious young hero.

Suddenly a number of Kaurava warriors surrounded Abhimanyu.

When Arjuna raced to his son's aid, Bhishma and Drona checked him. But the Pandava Bowman rained his dazzling arrows on them and forced them to retreat. The scene grew terrible.

Bhishma told Drona, "At this rate our hope to defeat Arjuna will be in vain. He will destroy all the Kauravas. Our soldiers cannot face





him. Now that the sun has gone down, let us stop the battle and retire. The trumpets sounded peace for the day and the combatants retired to their camps.

On the third day, the Kaurava armies were formed in the shape of Garuda, the heavenly bird, and the Pandavas arranged their troops like a half-moon.

Duryodhana chose Ghatotkacha, the brave half-demon son of Bhima, as his target, and the Pandavas launched a fearful attack on Bhishma and Drona. Abhimanyu engaged Satyaki and Shakuni in a fierce combat.

Ghatotkacha and Bhima, ranged

over the battlefield like fierce primeval monsters, and slew their enemies by the hundred. As the Kauravas watched in dismay, Duryodhana went to Bhishma and said: "Grandfather, how can this be? Even with you in the thick of the battle, our soldiers are melting away like snow! If your affection for the Pandavas is so great, you could have told me that you wouldn't go against Satyaki and Dhristadyumna! I'm afraid you're not giving your best."

These words stung the old patriarch to the quick and he roared: "Duryodhana, don't talk foolishness. Watch what I do now!"

He then launched a series of lightning attacks on the Pandava flanks. So great was his wrath, and so powerful his thrust that many warriors had their lives snuffed out like candles. The Pandava soldiers ran in wild disarray.

Lord Krishna turned to Arjuna and said: "Arjuna, now is the time for you to display your great skill. Do not wait!"

Arjuna at once turned his chariot round and drove towards Bhishma. Gandiva, his mighty bow, twanged. Bhishma's bow, struck by an arrow, broke into two. However, the old warrior took up another bow.

The Kaurava warriors rushed forward in a body and encircled

Arjuna. At the sight of so many thirsting to kill Arjuna, Lord Krishna exclaimed "Satyaki, look at those cowards. I feel like sending my celestial Chakra and kill Bhishma and Drona."

He then jumped down from the chariot and holding aloft his weapon rushed forward.

When Bhishma saw this dreadful sight, he smiled and said: "O Lord, to die at your hands will indeed be a great boon!"

Krishna retorted sharply: "You are the one responsible for this great war. If you had stopped the infamous gamble on that fateful day, all this would not have happened. Not only did you condone Duryodhana's deceit, but even now you stand by

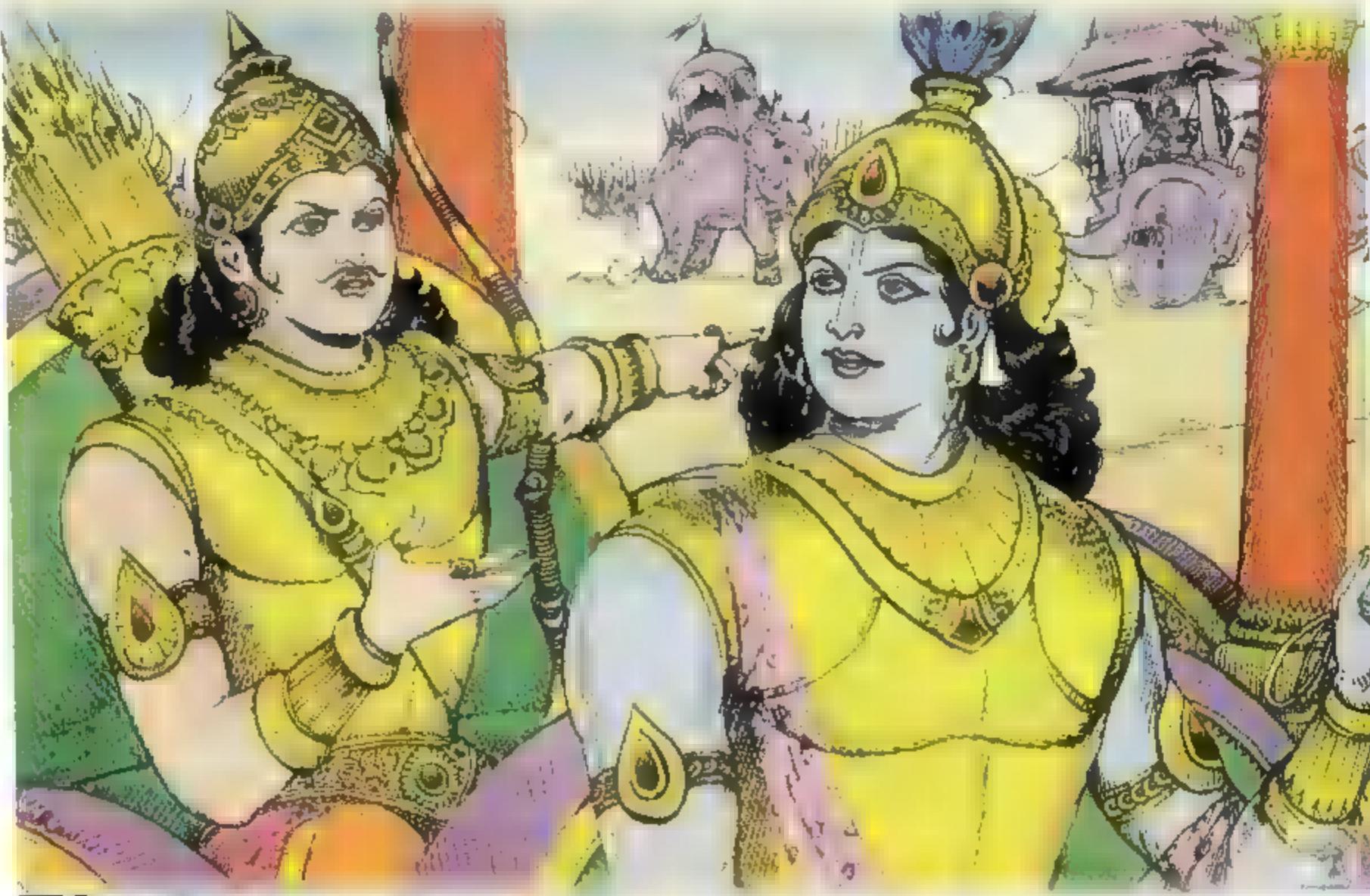
his side."

"I shall always do my duty for the ruling king!" declared Bhishma.

"Did not the Yadavas leave Kamsa when he became a tyrant? Don't the wicked deserve their own destruction?" asked Krishna.

Arjuna, who had also got down from his chariot hastened to Krishna. "Lord, you have promised to be impartial in this war. Don't break your pledge. I shall destroy the Kauravas. I stake my life on this."

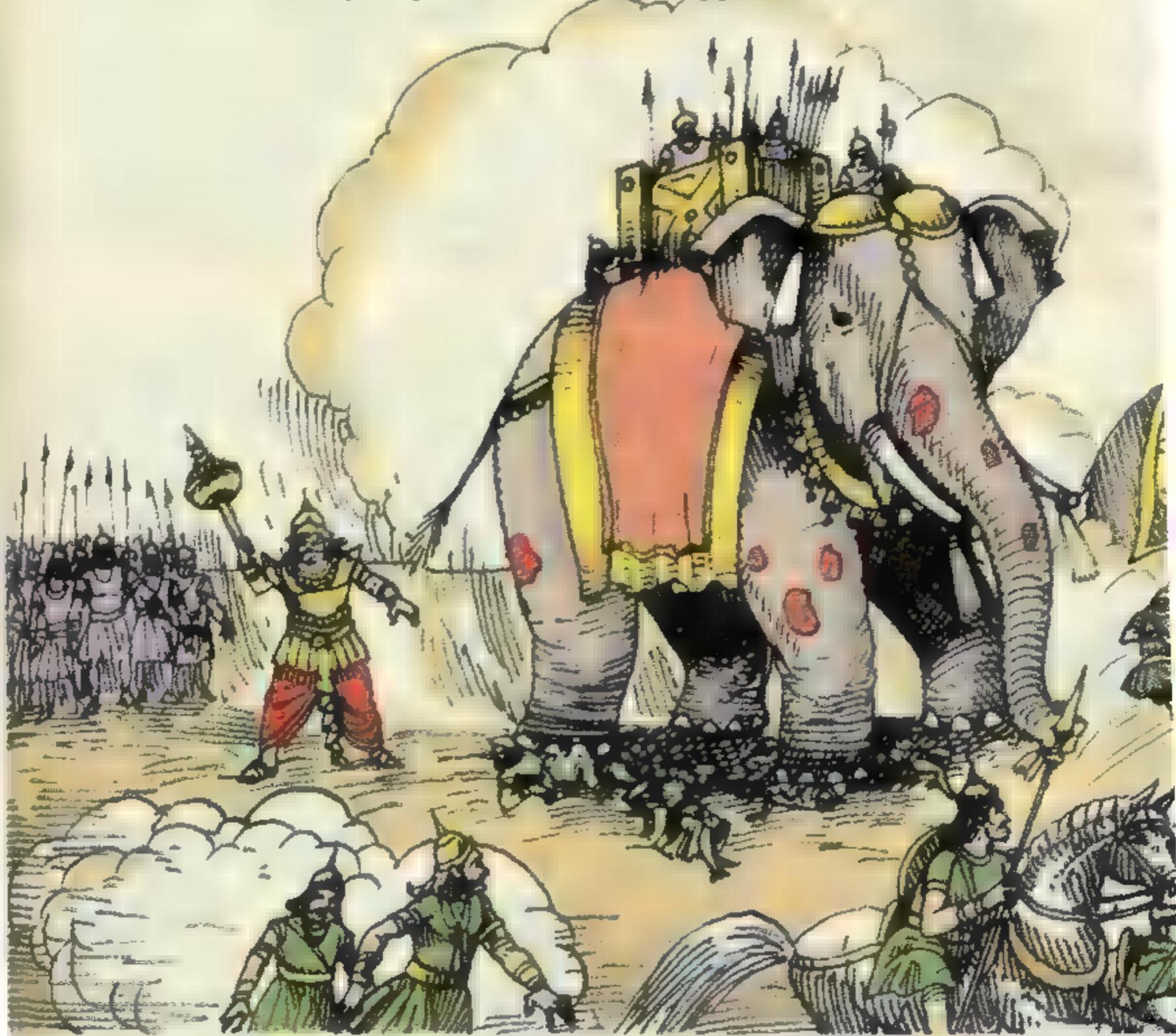
The agitation in him subsided, Krishna went back to his charioteer's seat and the battle was resumed. Soon Arjuna began to take a dreadful toll of Kaurava lives. He killed their elephants and horses by the thousand.



The Kurukshetra, the wide battle field, was splashed red with the blood of the slaughtered Kaurava troops. The anguished cries of the wounded and the dying filled the air. The Pandavas blew their conches in great jubilation. Then Arjuna shot the blessed *Indrastra* and the Kaurava forces ran in disorderly retreat. Thus the day ended in joyous victory for the Pandavas.

On the fourth day, Arjuna and

Bhishma were again locked in a titanic struggle. Drona, Kripa, Salya, Vivimsati and Duryodhana rallying round their commander attacked Arjuna. Abhimanyu ran to his father's aid, but was kept engaged by Salya. Bhima racing up from another part of the field swung his mighty mace and charged at the enemies. Duryodhana pressed his elephant corps into the assault. Bhima saw the menacing phalanx of the tuskers, and

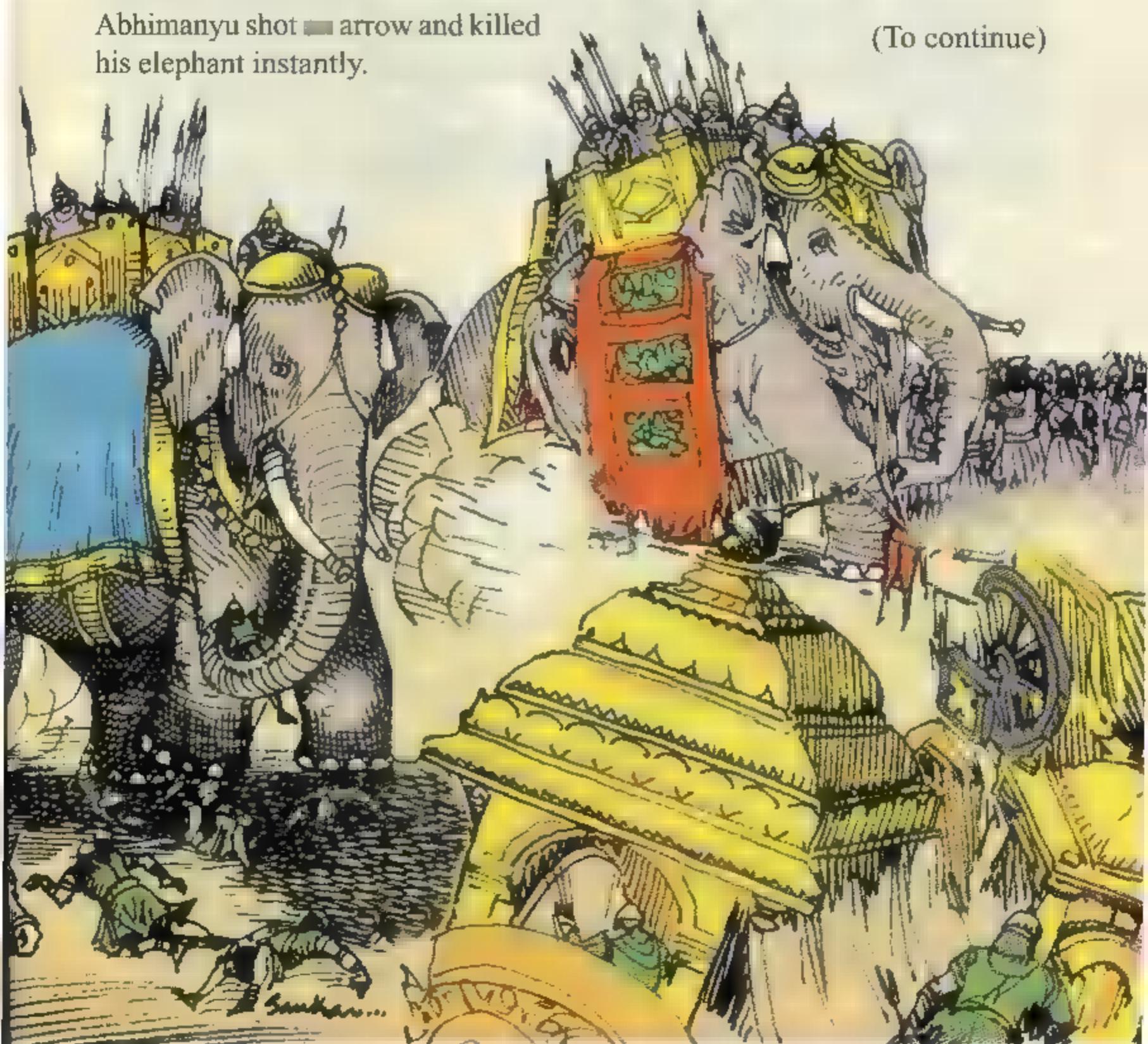


dodging their searching trunks, battered them with his mace. The elephants in the front row wheeled about in panic and mauled their own ranks. Great confusion arose and the Kauravas ran pell-mell.

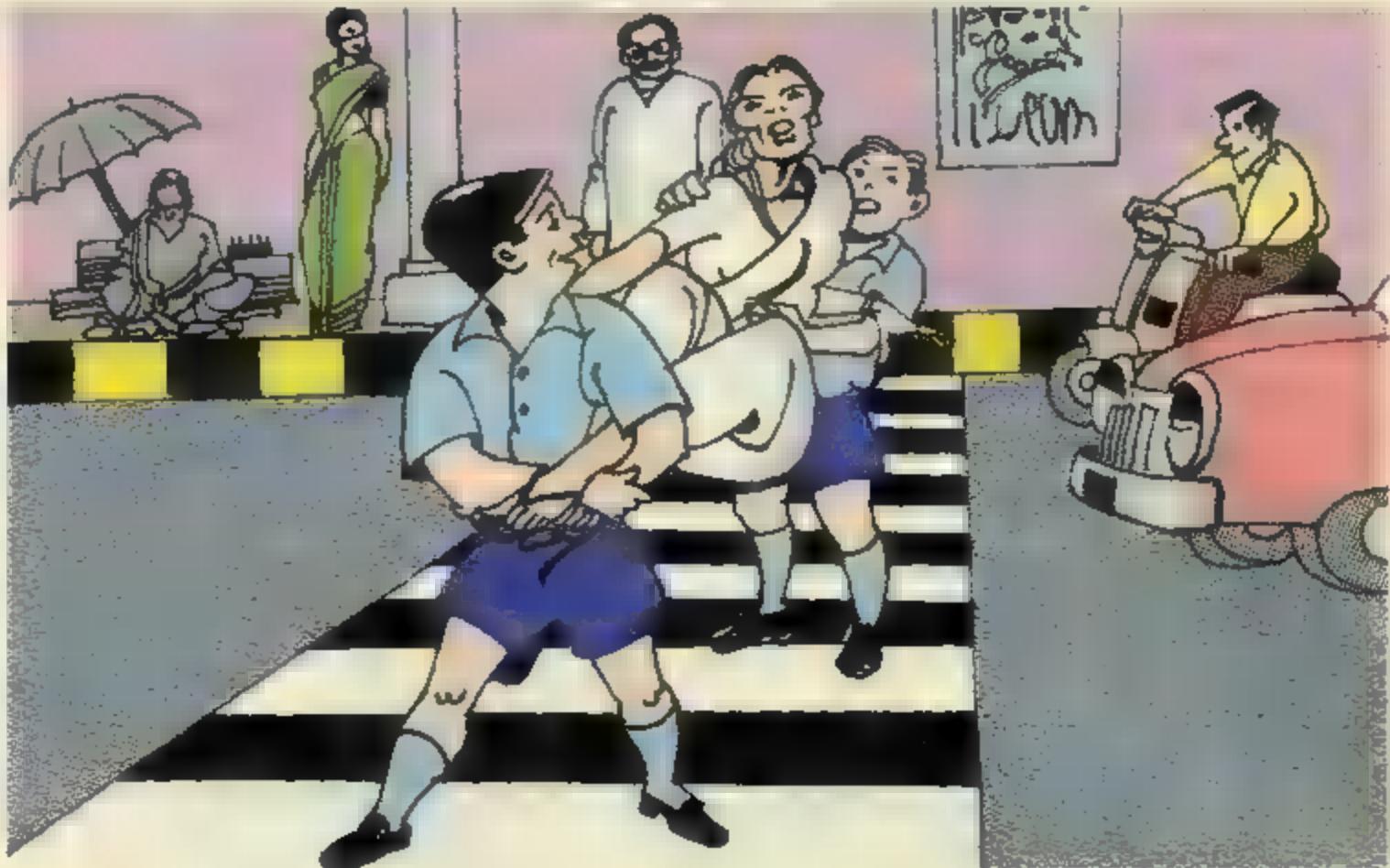
The elephant corps was commanded by the King of Magadha. Seated on his royal elephant, he went on urging his animals into the attack. But Abhimanyu shot an arrow and killed his elephant instantly.

All this was conveyed by Sanjaya to Dhritharashtra. The blind king ranted and raved: "Sanjaya, my heart trembles at the mention of the Pandavas. What will happen now? Will all the Kauravas be destroyed as Vidhura had prophesied? Is there no way the Kauravas can win over the Pandavas? Must all my sons be vanquished? Oh, what had I done to deserve such a harsh fate?"

(To continue)



## A day's good deed



"Dear students, apart from your studies, you must make it a point to do at least one small good deed to others every day!" said the headmaster in the class, during the prayer meeting.

He also explained what he meant by small good deeds: "Suppose a man is unable to lift his sack to his head, you should help him lift it. Suppose an old man or an old woman is hesitating to cross the road because of traffic, you should help them to do so."

Next day the headmaster asked his students, "Did any one of you do any good deed yesterday?"

"Sir!" Sudhir stepped forward. "John and I helped an old lady and led her from one footpath to the opposite footpath across the busy road."

"Was it necessary for the two of you to do it?" asked the headmaster.

"Otherwise she refused to budge!" replied Sudhir. "Even after we left her on the other footpath she was fuming and cursing! But we had done a good deed."



*It is easy for everybody to acquire fluency in preaching to others. Actual practice of righteousness, however, can be attributed to only some great souls.*

*—The Hitopadesha*

THEY STOOD UP TO THE BRITISH

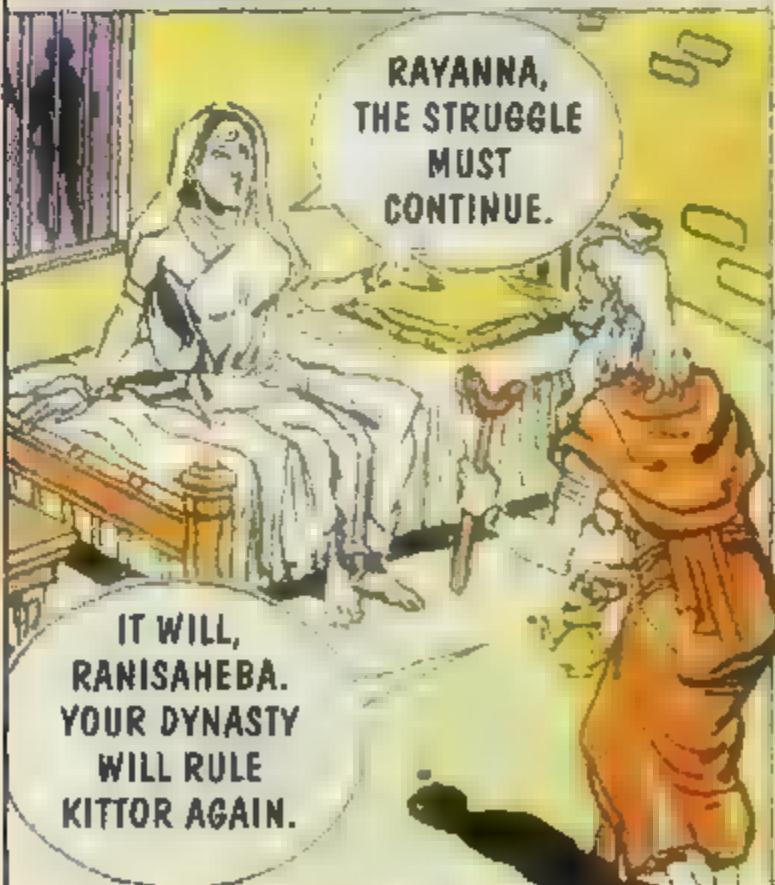
## RAYANNA OF SANGOLI

TEXT: MEERA UGRA H ARTIST: GOUTAM SEN

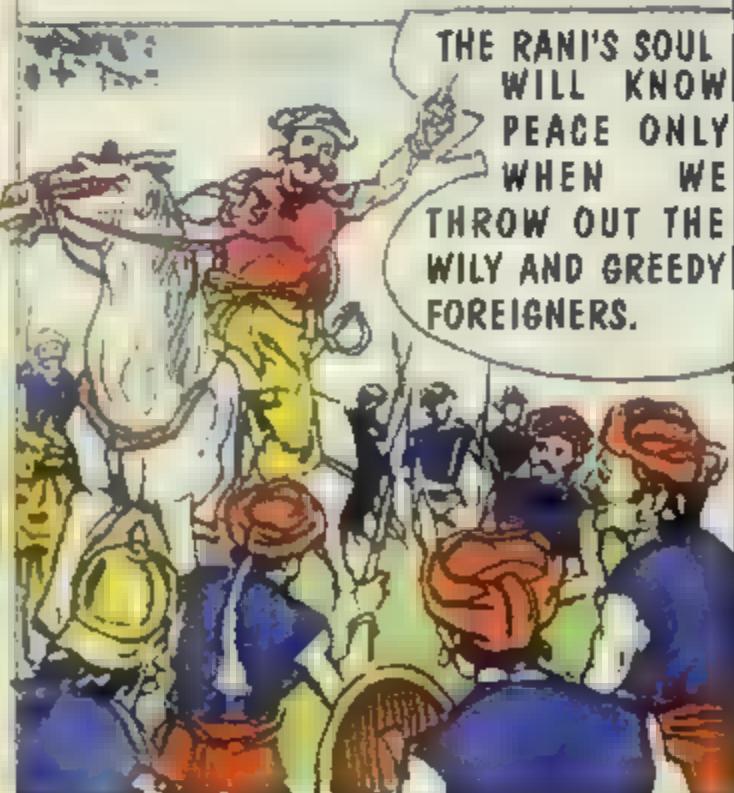
RAYANNA, WHO HAD FOUGHT WITH RANI CHENNAMMA WAS TAKEN PRISONER AFTER THE FALL OF KITTOR. WHEN HE WAS RELEASED HE WENT TO THE PALACE AND FOUND IT IN RUINS.

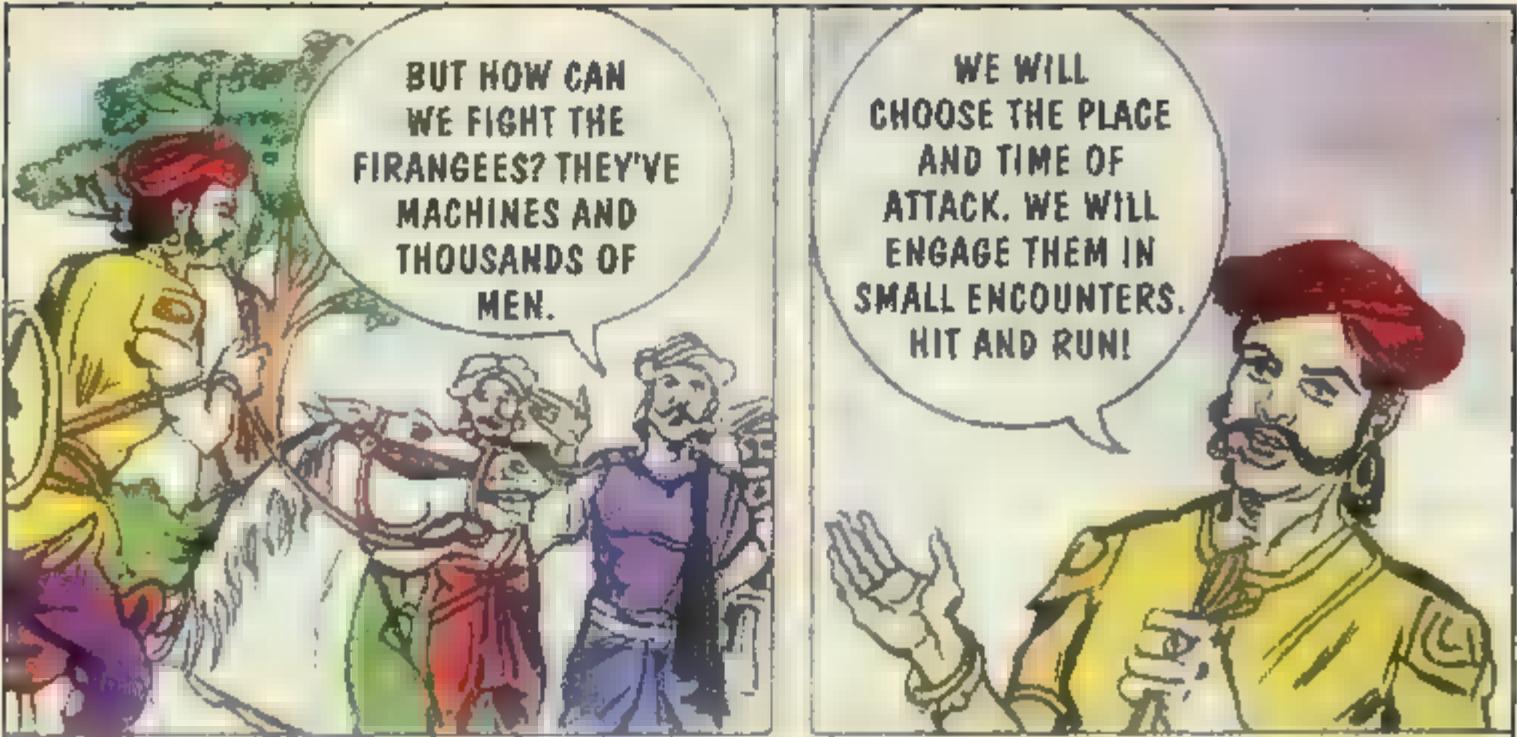


DISGUISED AS AN ASCETIC, RAYANNA CALLED ON THE IMPRISONED RANI.



WHEN RANI CHENNAMMA PASSED AWAY SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, RAYANNA TOURED MANY VILLAGES TO MUSTER SUPPORT.





MANY PROMISED SUPPORT. RAYANNA MADE THE HILLS OF BALANGUND AND HANDI BADAGANATH HIS HEADQUARTERS.

THE SMALL BRITISH CONTINGENT AT BIDI WAS TAKEN BY SURPRISE.



LATER HE LAUNCHED A SERIES OF ATTACKS ON BRITISH ESTABLISHMENTS.





HIS ACTIVITIES ALARMED THE ENGLISH OFFICERS.

OUR DAK WAS LOOTED ONCE AGAIN!



RAYANNA HAS CUT OFF OUR LINKS WITH BOMBAY.

RAYANNA HARASSED THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES FOR TWO YEARS. THEN—



LINGANNA GAUDA JOINED RAYANNA ALONG WITH A FRIEND. THE TWO WON RAYANNA'S CONFIDENCE.

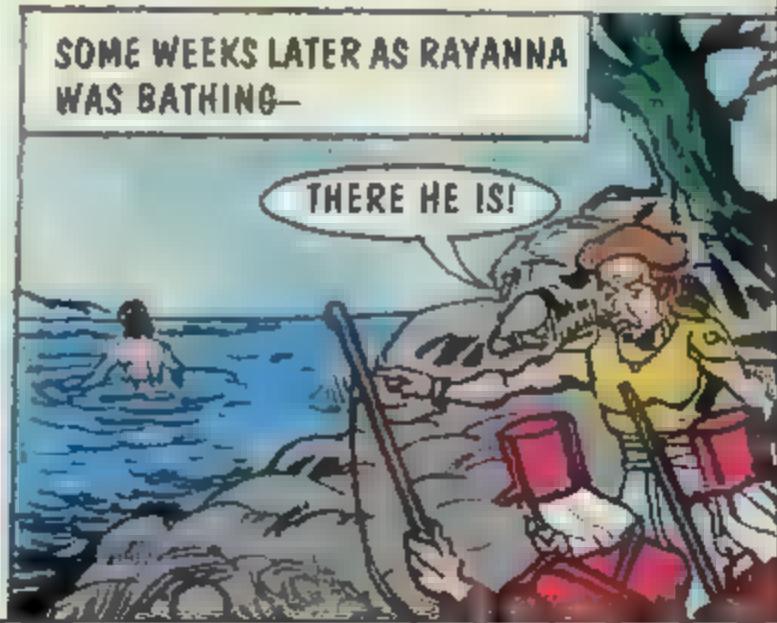


THANKS TO YOUR HELP OUR RAID ON AANGAD FORT WAS A SUCCESS.



SOME WEEKS LATER AS RAYANNA WAS BATHING—

THERE HE IS!

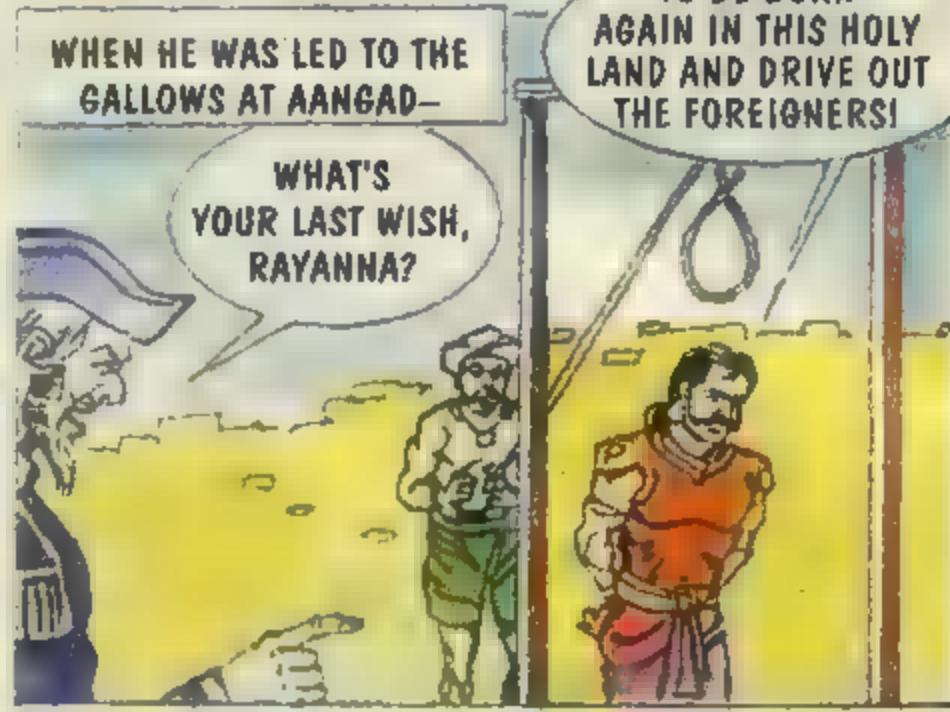




RAYANNA WAS TRIED AND SENTENCED TO DEATH ON DECEMBER 28, 1830.

WHEN HE WAS LED TO THE GALLows AT AANGAD-

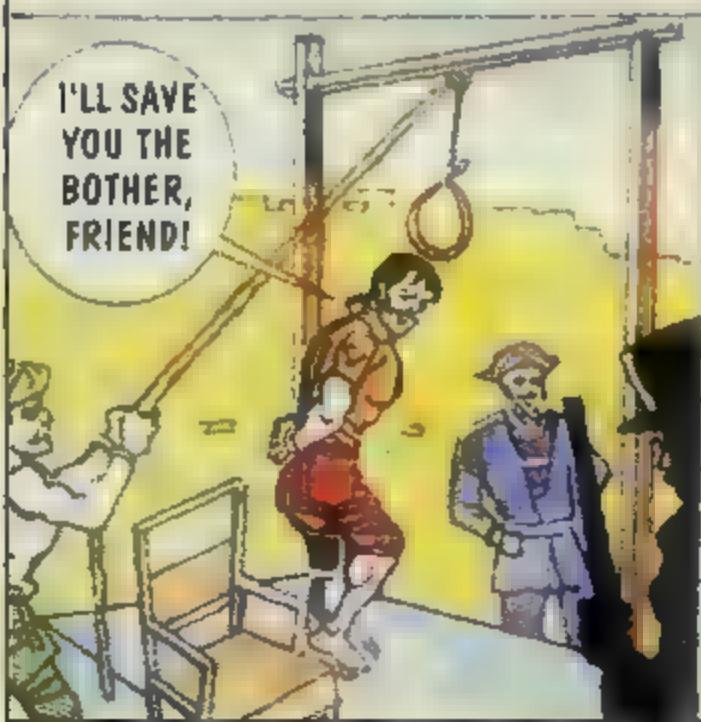
TO BE BORN AGAIN IN THIS HOLY LAND AND DRIVE OUT THE FOREIGNERS!



WHEN THE HANGMAN CAME FORWARD TO PUT THE NOOSE AROUND HIS NECK-

I'LL SAVE YOU THE BOTHER, FRIEND!

HE PUT HIS HEAD INTO THE NOOSE AND JUMPED FROM THE PLATFORM



TODAY, A STATUE OF RAYANNA STANDS AT BELGAUM REMINDING PEOPLE OF THE HERO OF SANGOLI.



## The dream and the mirror

Virdas was a wealthy man who owned a sweetmeat shop in the bazaar. His poor neighbour, the orphan Babloo, did sundry jobs for him. Babloo expected no money from Virdas who was known to be a miser, but he hoped that Virdas would at least reward him with a sweetmeat or two. He gave hints several times, saying, "Uncle, the *luddoos* today look delicate!" or "How excellent are the *jilebis*! They must be tasting fantastic!"

But Virdas would pretend not to understand the hint.

"Babloo," one day Virdas called out to the boy, "would you walk down

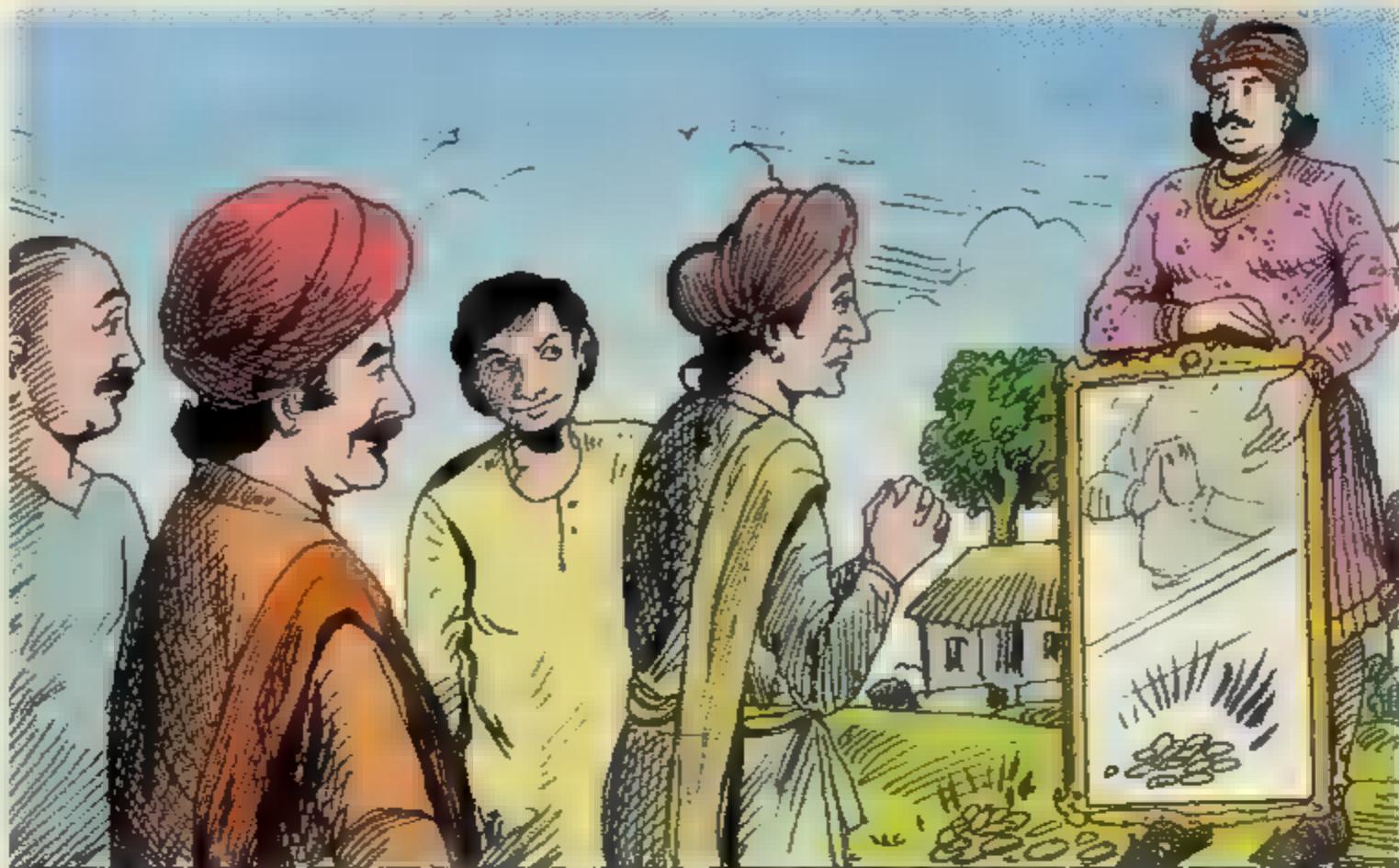
to the village Sudhagram, only five miles away, and deliver a message to my son-in-law?"

"Sorry, Uncle, I'm extremely tired today," said Babloo. He was indeed tired.

But Virdas was very unhappy at Babloo's disobedience.

Next day, in the morning, while passing by the sweetmeat shop, Babloo said innocently, "Uncle! I dreamed an interesting dream at night. You gave me a plateful of *luddoos* and I enjoyed them so much!"

"A plateful of *luddoos*, is it? Must be half a dozen. Very well, pay me



only half a rupee!"

At first Babloo thought that Virdas was joking. But soon it became obvious that he meant business! He would not let Babloo pass by unless he had been paid!

Several people gathered as the two argued on the issue. "Be it in your wakeful state or be it in your dream, the fact is, you got satisfaction by eating my *luddoos*! Hence pay you must!" insisted Virdas.

The king, in disguise, was riding by. He got down from his horse. "Gentlemen!" he said addressing those present. "Babloo must pay—but in the same manner as he ate the *luddoos*."

He placed small coins amounting to half a rupee on the ground.

Borrowing a mirror from a nearby shop, he held it against the coins.

"Do you see those coins in the mirror?" he asked Virdas.

"Yes!" replied Virdas.

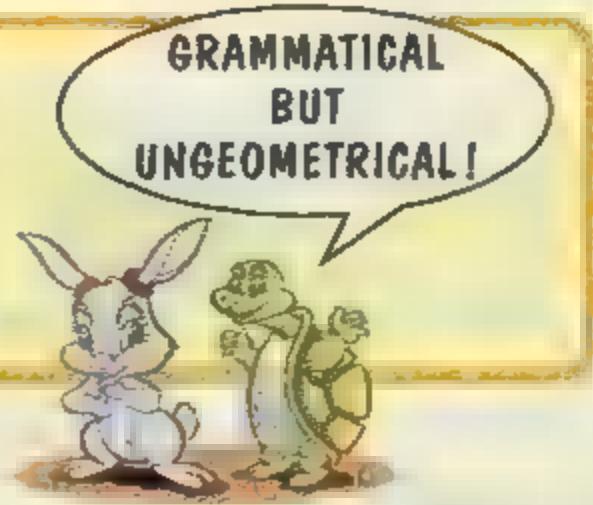
"Good. Now pick up the amount—not from the ground but from the mirror," said the king. "Your satisfaction will then match Babloo's."

The people gathered there laughed. Virdas was moving away. But the king detained him.

"For the humiliation you have caused this boy, he will own the shop for a day and eat sweetmeats to his heart's content," ordered the king after identifying himself.

All stood amazed. The king had to be obeyed.

# Towards Better English



③ ETISHREE BISAWAL of Durgapur was having a chat with her friends. Suddenly, one of them protested: "Now, you're flying off at a tangent!" Etishree knew that a tangent is a line that touches a curve at a point so that it is closer to the curve in the vicinity of the point than any other line. But that is something she had learnt in geometry. Now the three friends were not discussing any problem in geometry. So, what does this 'flying off at a tangent' mean, she wonders.

'To fly off' at a tangent' or 'to go off' at a tangent' simply means, to start saying something that does not seem to be connected with what one had been saying; to break off suddenly into a different line of thought. Imagine a situation where someone vehemently argues in favour of the Women's Reservation Bill and in the same breath pleads for air-conditioning of all kitchens!

## THE ORIGIN OF TANTALISE

Everybody knows the story of Sita, who is enamoured of the golden deer and asks Rama to catch it for her. He goes after it and every time he is about to lay his hands on it, the animal flees away, frustrating his efforts to catch it. The deer thus tantalises him.

The word tantalise comes from the mythological King Tantalus who ruled Phrygia. He steals the food meant for the gods and thus incurs their wrath. They punish him by making him stand in water, deep upto his chin, beneath a tree with boughs bearing plenty of sweet fruits which hang over his head almost within his reach. Dying of thirst, he bends down to drink, but the water recedes and reappears when he holds his head erect. Similarly, whenever he attempts to get at the fruit, the wind blows it out of his reach, King Tantalus was tormented in this manner for eternity.

*Contributed by R. GOPALAKRISHNAN*

# WINDOW ON THE WORLD

## THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY MARCHES ON

India has emerged from a nationwide Election. This was the 13th Election in the history of independent India. We congratulate our Prime Minister, his Cabinet, the M.P.'s and last but not least, the people of India.

An Election brings into existence ■ new Lok Sabha. This is one of the two wings of our Parliament, the other one being the Rajya Sabha. Once a new Lok Sabha is formed, it should normally continue for five years. According to that calculation we should have had ten Elections by now. If we have more, it is because some Lok Sabhas, in the recent past, did not last their full terms. Again, that is because no single party had sufficient number of elected Members to form a government. So some parties joined hands in doing so. Sometimes ■ party did not join the government but supported the government. Once such understanding among the parties was gone, the government fell.

India won freedom from the British rule in 1947, but she had to pay ■ high price for it. Tens of thousands of people were killed in bloody communal riots and a part of the sub-continent seceded from India and called itself Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan accepted democracy. Many

## THE STAR OF GERMAN LITERATURE

The Nobel Prize for Literature for the year 1999 had gone to the German writer, Guenter Grass. Born in 1927 at Danzing, Guenter Grass has been a highly influential novelist for the last 30 years in Germany.

The most famous among his several novels is *The Tin Drum*. In this the author looks at the society through the eyes of a dwarf, named Oscar, who lives at Danzing, the author's home-city. Oscar's intelligence, feelings and understanding grows as they should grow in a normal boy, but he continues to look a child.

Like a child he plays ■ tin drum. He goes on doing that throughout the rise and fall of the Nazi power led by Hitler.

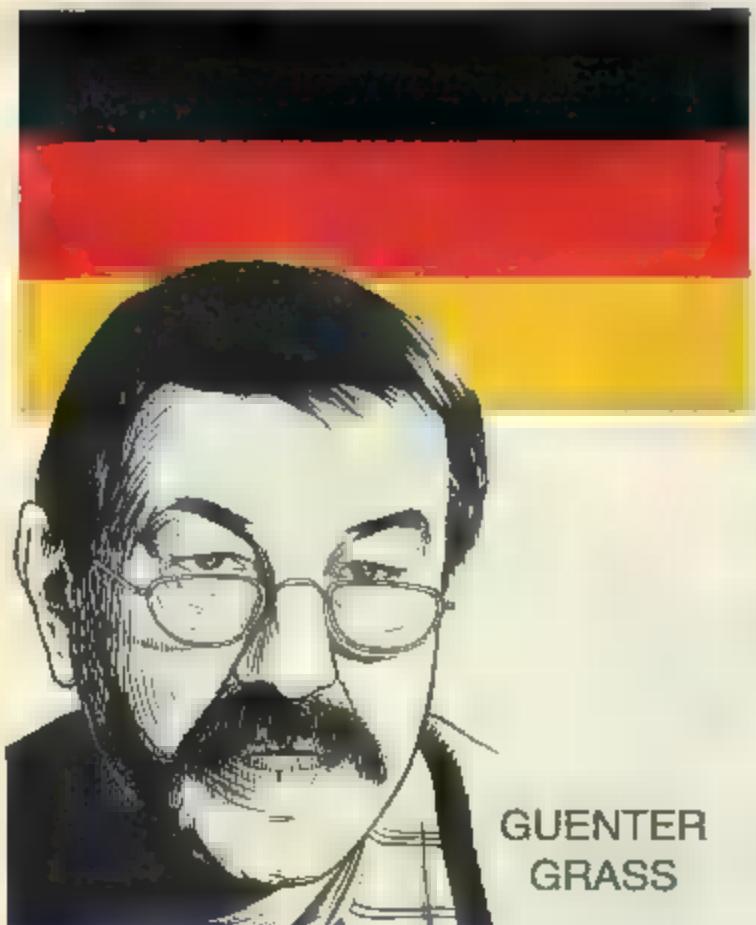
When the World War II comes to an end in 1945, Oscar's limbs begin to grow

observers in the world thought that neither of these two countries will be able to retain democracy for long. Their impression has proved right in the case of Pakistan. For the greater part of time in her life, Pakistan has been ruled by the army or by a dictator. But India continues to shine gloriously as the world's largest democracy. If our people and our politicians will prove more responsible, India can make great progress economically,

educationally and industrially. According to ■ calculation by the Asian Development Bank, if India has a stable government, she can become the fastest growing economy in Asia during the year 2000. The people, the officials and the politicians have to be more patriotic. That is all that is needed.



towards maturity. But that process stops again. Probably it shows Oscar's hopes for a more sensible humanity. Oscar, who lived more or less like ■ prisoner in an institution, is released. But what is he going to do now? Which way should he go? He cannot decide. He



GUENTER  
GRASS

begins beating his drum. He decides to go whichever way the sound would lead him.

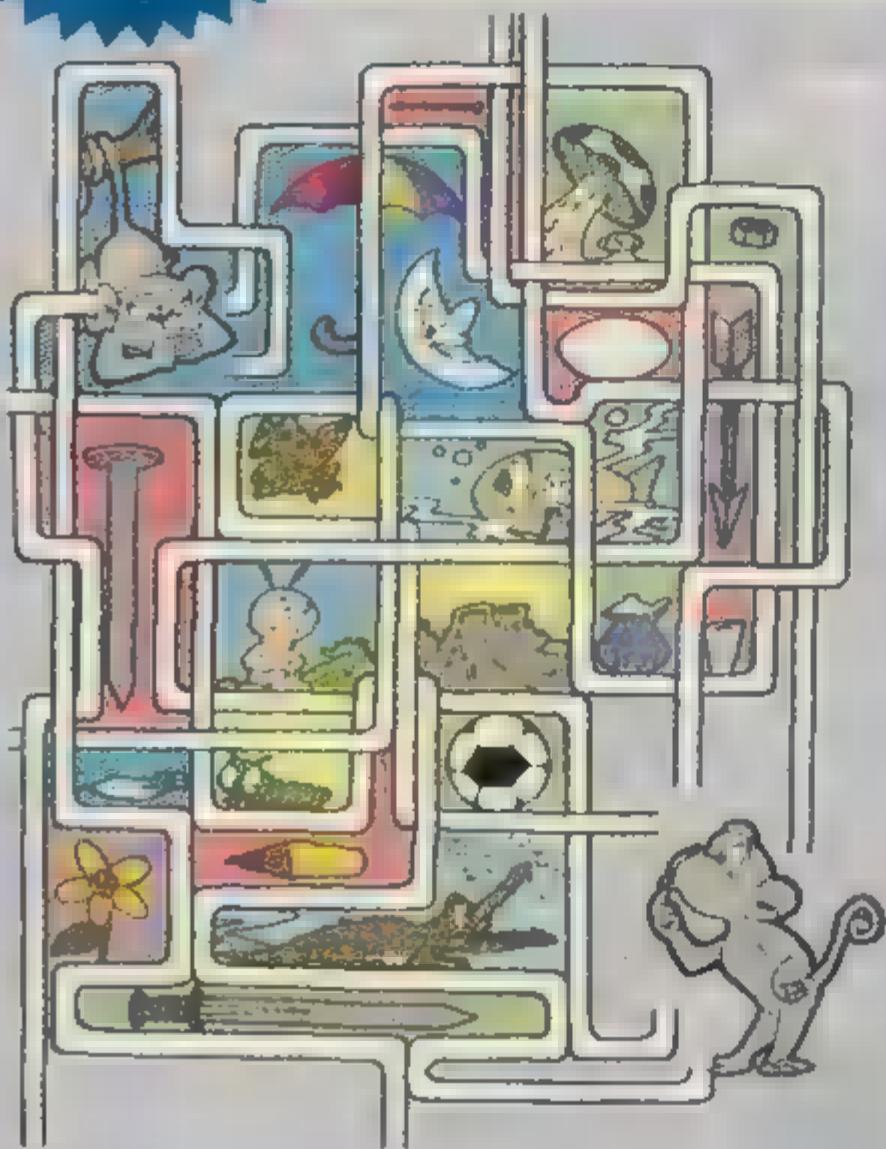
Yet another popular novel of Grass is *The Flounder*. It opens on a day going back to the Neolithic age—and ends in our own time. The author surveys civilization in a funny way, through the eyes of a fisherman. The fisherman grows wiser with the help of a fish, the flounder. What brings about great changes through evolution are the battle between men and women for dominance and innovations in cooking! That is what the book has to say.

Grass has visited India more than once. Once he directed a play in Calcutta.

He is the 6th German author to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, the earlier ones being Theodor Mommsen (1902), Rudolf Eucken(1908), Paul Von Heyse (1910), Gerhard Hauptmann (1912), Thomas Mann (1929) and Heinrich Boll(1972).

WAN  
MAZI

Help Raju monkey find  
a way to his girlfriend  
Mini monkey.



Jungle

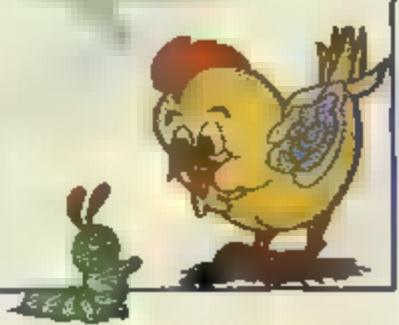


**Look closely! How many horses  
can you see?**

**SHOW THE WAY**



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SHADOWS WITH THEIR  
CORRECT PIECES!**





# LET US KNOW

## \* What is Y2K problem?

—Kumar Nityanand and Sumant Bhandra, Chinchwad, Pune

The letter Y stands for 'year', K represents 1000. Thus 2K will mean 2000. When computers came into common use in the 1950s, the starting time information in computers used the last two digits of the year. For example, the date 30-4-1998 is referred to as 30-4-98. When the year 2000 is reached, there will be confusion if both 1-1-1900 and 1-1-2000 are coded as 01-01-00. Computers are sure to go haywire. This will pose a big problem, especially in the areas of accounting, insurance, income tax, and the like. Since then scientists have been racking their brains to "recalibrate" the basic inputs to meet the needs of the millennium. Of course, the same problem would crop up in the year 3000. Ultimately will there be a permanent solution? Let's wait and watch.

## \* What is the difference between bureaucracy and democracy?

—Rupesh Shinde, Belgaum

Democracy is a form of government in which the supreme power invested in the people collectively, and is administered by them directly or by officers appointed by them. This group of officers are collectively known as bureaucracy. India has a Council of Ministers assisted in the administration by a set up of Secretaries and subordinate officers. The latter form the bureaucratic system.

## \* Which airport is situated at the greatest height in the world?

—D. Naveen Kumar, Kharagpur

The one at Leh, in Jammu & Kashmir

## \* Why do some people have the tendency to talk to themselves? Is it due to mental depression or shock?

—R. Sharadha, Kailasapuram, Tiruchi

When a person is alone, he or she is given to thinking and if there is an intensity of thoughts which forces him or her to take a decision, a streak of thought assumes the form of speech, invariably without he or she being aware of it. The soliloquy of Hamlet "To be or not to be..." in Shakespeare's play of the same name is a famous example of someone talking to himself. Such talks need not be caused by shock or depression.



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## THE SIMPLETON'S TREASURE BOX

In a small Javanese town a burglar became a menace. He would enter a house so stealthily that even the most careful household could not know about it.

The Sultan announced that whoever can catch the thief would receive ten thousand rupiah as reward. Days passed. The burglary continued, but the thief remained at large.

In the town lived a simpleton named Kyay. One day people saw him passing through the bazaar, carrying a tin box on his head.

"What is that?" curious passers-by asked.

"My maternal grandpa died, leaving his money for me in this box," answered Kyay.

"How lucky you are! How much is there?"

"Don't know. I am forbidden to open it before an auspicious day" replied Kyay.

"Fine. But don't announce your luck. Beware of the burglar!" well-wishers advised him.

"But how can the burglar take away anything? The box is locked!" answered Kyay confidently.

People laughed, but nobody was surprised, for they knew Kyay to be rather foolish.

At midnight Kyay's neighbours heard a piercing cry. Lanterns in hands, they came out to the street. Somebody was rolling in front of Kyay's house, blinded and in terrible pain. Kyay's famous box was lying open.

The box contained a beehive. Kyay had brought it from a friend who was in honey business. His announcement, as expected, had attracted the thief. The thief had broken open the lock to pour the wealth into his bag, as carrying the box was inconvenient.



## MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE DISEASE?

There is an institution in New Delhi known as "The Delhi Society for the Promotion of the Rational Use of Drugs". At the instance of the world Health Organisation, they made a survey of the habit of Indians to swallow medicinal pills. What they found is horrible. Doctors prescribe drugs in a hurry and patients take them in hurry,



without giving nature or the automatic healing capacity of our body a chance. 60 percent of the medicines given by a leading hospital in our capital were antibiotics. In many cases they were not necessary at all. Such habits may sometimes result in a situation which is more dangerous than the illness. Such unnecessary use of medicines also pushes up their price in a country where millions cannot afford any medicine at all!

## STUDENTS AGAINST OBSCENITY

It is wrong to think that the students fall easy prey to vulgarity and obscenity. Recently a popular weekly published an obscene chapter from a new novel by a popular writer. The B.A. Final students



of G.C.G., Chandigarh en masse protested to the editor against this trend. We congratulate the students.

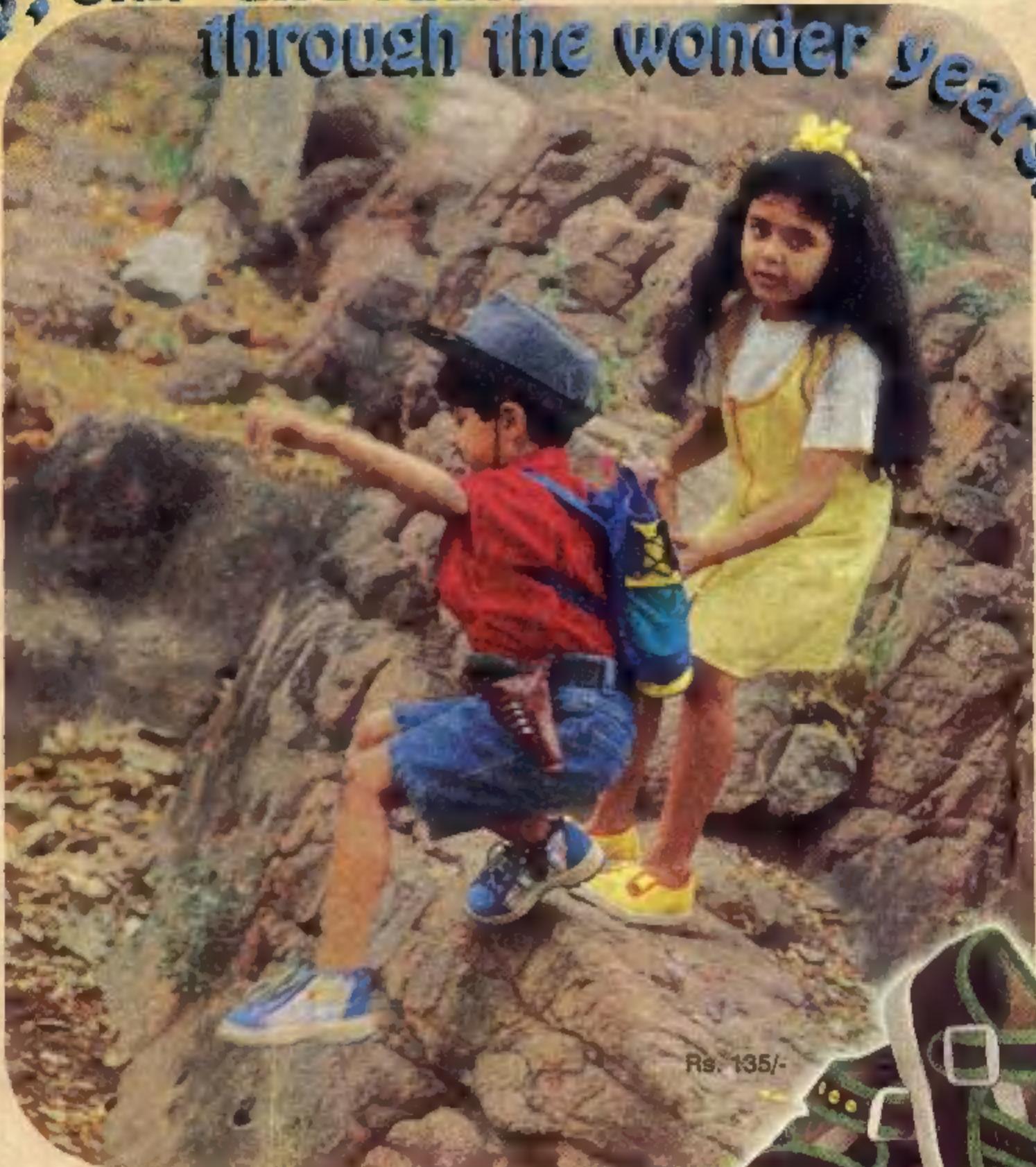
## DOG SURPASSES THE CAT

It is believed that the cat has nine lives. That is to say, they do not die easily. Be that true or not, two dogs have proved to have more stamina than any other creature. There was a devastating earthquake in Taiwan, killing a large number of people. But after 437 hours,



two dogs were pulled out of the rubble, alive and whining! They were protected by a chair and they ate and drank from a freezer lying near them.

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